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'Make disclosure of proximity to gas pipeline mandatory'

Planning law expert says information vital to protect rights of property buyers due to potential risks.

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As bloc chair, Malaysia could elevate issue to regional level to seek common solutions, says academic.

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Need for stricter measures against double parking offenders

Surveillance cameras, increased patrols and immediate towing of vehicles could act as strong deterrents: Road safety specialist

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Houses and cars a stone's throw from the gas pipeline fire in Jalan Harmoni, Putra Heights were hollowed out by the intense heat of the flames, with temperature estimated at 1,500°C at its height. — ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

Excavation work done at blast site

Selangor police chief says 56 witnesses, including residents and contractor called to provide statements, with full report on cause of fire tragedy expected in two weeks.

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Cops reveal excavation work stopped two days prior to blast

► Excavator used at development area sank into hole created by explosion, says Selangor police chief

■ BY IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE
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SUBANG JAYA: Police have confirmed that excavation works were being carried out at the explosion site in Putra Heights prior to the blast that occurred there on April 1.

Selangor police chief Datuk Hussein Omar Khan said yesterday that an excavator used at the site had sunk into a crater created by

the blast.

He said work using an excavator and backhoe was being carried out and had stopped on March 30.

"The explosion caused a massive hole about 8m deep and 70m wide. The (integrity) of the site was impacted by the explosion and is not stable at the moment."

Hussein was speaking at a media conference yesterday at the blast site command centre in Jalan Harmoni, Putra Heights.

He said there are three gas pipelines beneath the explosion site.

"One of them broke and caused a big explosion."

However, he added that further investigations are necessary to identify whether the excavation works at the project site caused the explosion.

Hussein said due to the instability of the affected site, a full report on the cause of the incident is expected to be made public in two weeks.

"Currently, the focus is to stabilise the explosion site and to retrieve the excavator that sank."

He confirmed that no bodies were found at the site at press time, and no missing person reports have

been lodged.

"So far, 56 witnesses, including residents and the contractor have been called to have their statements recorded."

Hussein said one key witness, a security guard at the shoplot project, has also been identified by police.

On April 1, a catastrophic gas pipeline explosion in Putra Heights resulted in a huge fireball, with some 200 houses affected by the inferno.

The blaze, which occurred at 8.10am, affected a total of 1,254 people from 308 families.

Eighty-seven homes were completely destroyed and rendered uninhabitable, while 148 homes sustained damage but are considered liveable after repairs are undertaken.

Gas supply to several areas reduced

PETALING JAYA: Following the recent incident at Putra Heights, Gas Malaysia has implemented a gas supply curtailment for several areas in the Klang Valley.

Customers in Shah Alam, Kundang, Petaling Jaya, Teluk Panglima Garang, Pelabuhan Klang, Pulau Indah and surrounding regions are among those affected.

Gas Malaysia said the company is working closely with gas suppliers and relevant authorities to minimise disruptions.

"Affected customers have already been notified, and Gas Malaysia is committed to providing continuous updates as the situation progresses," it said in a statement.

It added that its pipeline network and gas facilities are secure, with all necessary precautions in place to maintain safety standards.

It said the company's management has been in communication with stakeholders and is actively monitoring the situation.

The curtailment follows the closure of four city gate stations in the affected area. — By **DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM**

Selangor offers temporary homes to affected residents

KUALA LUMPUR: The Selangor Housing and Real Estate Board has agreed to offer more than 100 houses as temporary homes for victims of the fire, said Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari.

He said the houses are in Kota Warisan, Sepang, and those in other locations would be part of the Selangor Smart Sewa scheme.

He said the locations of the Smart Sewa and Airbnb houses would be finalised in a week or two.

He was speaking at the Putra Heights Mosque temporary relief centre for the fire victims yesterday.

Present were Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo and Selangor Investment, Trade and Mobility Committee chairman Ng Sze Han.

Amirudin said 115 houses have been identified as safe to be reoccupied.

"This second group of victims will be allowed to return to their homes today after technical authorities confirm that their homes are safe to be occupied and the utility services have been reconnected." — Bernama



RIDE RELIEF ... A resident signing documents to take delivery of a vehicle as part of assistance to those affected by the Putra Heights fire. — **BERNAMAPIC**

Residents recount harrowing experience of Putra Heights inferno

■ BY HARITH KAMAL
AND KIRTINEE RAMESH
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SUBANG JAYA: Residents of the recent gas pipeline explosion in Putra Heights say they are unsure whether they can ever feel safe again in their homes after the massive inferno that affected their neighbourhood.

Nisa Mahmud, 38, from Kampung Kuala Sungai Baru, Puchong, which borders the site of the explosion, recounted the terrifying moments when the fire broke out.

Nisa, whose house is located near a riverbank, described the unbearable heat during the blast.

"The heat from the flames was so intense that we had to evacuate immediately and jump into the river."

"It wasn't minutes later, it was

instant. As soon as it happened, we could feel the heat. We were scared and had no idea what to do. All six of us, including my one-year-old, had no choice but to jump into the river to escape."

"It was so close, and we were terrified it would spread to our house. I didn't even have time to think. I just grabbed my baby and jumped," she told *theSun*.

Although the fire did not directly reach her home, the intense heat caused significant damage.

"A lot of things were burned just from the heat. It's scary to think about going back. I'm not sure if I can live there any more."

"But at the end of the day, I'm just thankful that my family is safe. That's what matters most," Nisa said.

Another resident, Shoffri Mohd Isa,

39, who lives in the same village, was not home when the explosion occurred.

"I was in Sabah when it happened. My neighbour broke the news to me, and our Raya mood completely vanished. It was devastating to hear, and I felt helpless being so far away."

When he received the news on the second day of *Aidilfitri*, Shoffri immediately booked a ticket to return home.

"When I arrived, we were not allowed to enter and were immediately relocated to a temporary relief centre. I didn't even get the chance to see my house, but from the videos my neighbours sent me, the damage was severe."

He said he is afraid to continue living in the area due to the presence of the gas pipeline.

"I know the government has promised to help with aid, but I don't know if I will feel safe staying there any more."

"There's a lot to consider, but right now, I'm still in shock. I just hope something good comes out of this for us."

"Relocation may be difficult, but I'm optimistic that things will get better. I just have to wait for what the authorities decide. For now, I'm just grateful to be with my family."

Muhammad Azril Zool Kapli, 25, who lives nearby, also shared his experience.

"We heard a loud sound that morning. The explosion happened only about 200m away. We were woken up by it and immediately felt the heatwave."

He said he and his five other family

members quickly escaped on motorcycles.

"Thank God we had motorcycles. All six of us rode out because even within seconds we could feel the heat."

Azril said they were later instructed to move to the relief centre.

He added that while his family has insurance, they are uncertain if they can make a claim.

"We do have insurance for the house, but I'm still unsure if it covers fire damage of this scale."

"We'll have to check with the agent and go through the process, but looking at the condition of the house, it might end up being a total loss."

All the affected residents are staying at the Putra Heights Mosque temporary relief centre.

theSun launches weekend editions

AFTER 18 years, theSun will publish again on Saturdays and Sundays effective today. The newspaper has seen many changes from the time it first hit news stands in 1993.

It briefly halted in 1994 for a revamp and resumed a month later. In 2002 it repositioned itself again, this time making a radical move to go free. It was the first free newspaper in Malaysia.

The free model focused on advertising sustainability and theSun upped its publication to over 300,000 copies a day to take top spot in terms of circulation.

But with the gradual paradigm shift in advertising, moving from print to digital, and the disruption to the print industry, theSun decided to shift back to a paid paper model in November 2023

at an affordable RM1 per copy.

theSun has never been afraid of making changes. A little over a year since our move to be a paid model, we have decided to make another bold move and publish on Saturdays and Sundays starting this week. Always one to buck the trend, our weekend papers will cost the same RM1, even on Sundays, but with much added value.

Watch out for a 12-page Sunday Special, plus four pages of Motoring and a section on Feng Shui coupled with all the information from the 12 zodiac signs.

As theSun embarks on this exciting new journey, we hope you will reach out and subscribe to the paper, accessible also in digital i-paper format, that will keep you informed all seven days of the week.



MEF backs paid leave proposal for affected workers

BY DEEPAKASHMI MANICKAM
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PETALING JAYA: The recent gas pipeline explosion has left the local community reeling, with significant damage reported.

At least 190 houses were affected, along with 148 cars and 11 motorcycles. A total of 112 individuals sustained injuries, with 63 requiring hospitalisation for burns, respiratory issues and other injuries, while 49 received initial treatment.

In light of the crisis, the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has expressed full support for the Human Resources Ministry's call for employers to provide paid compassionate leave and consider flexible work arrangements (FWA) for employees affected by the disaster.

MEF President Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman, in a statement yesterday, emphasised the importance of empathetic measures in supporting employees during this difficult time.

"MEF stands in full support of the ministry's call for employees affected by the incident.

"FWA is provided for under Section 60P of the Employment Act 1955, allowing for changes in working hours, working days and work locations."

Syed Hussain extended his deepest sympathies to all those impacted by the incident and underscored the role of private sector employers in showing empathy and responsibility.

"MEF recognises that many affected employees face distress due to personal loss, displacement and the well-being of their families. It is crucial for businesses to adopt compassionate policies that support their employees while ensuring business continuity."

"Employers play a key role in fostering a supportive work environment, particularly during crises. Offering paid compassionate leave and considering flexible work arrangements are not only humane but contribute to employees' morale, well-being and productivity in the long run."

MEF also urged businesses to take proactive steps such as providing mental health support and counselling, and ensuring clear communication and assistance channels.

"We commend private sector employers who have already taken steps to support their affected employees and encourage all businesses, regardless of size, to consider the measures as part of their Environmental, Social and Governance initiatives."

Blaze sparks calls for full disclosure on gas pipelines

BY IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE
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PETALING JAYA: Planning law expert Derek Fernandez has stressed the importance of ensuring future property buyers are fully informed about the proximity of gas pipelines to their properties.

He said the information is vital, in light of the Putra Heights gas pipeline explosion on April 1, to protect the rights of buyers, due to the unforeseen risks that they are undertaking.

"It should be mandatory for developers to disclose the presence of gas pipelines near or within the vicinity of any property development. Detailed layout plans must also be made available to all purchasers," he told theSun.

Fernandez said future buyers have the right to this information, as the property's value could potentially decrease due to its proximity to

such locations.

▶ Property buyers should be made aware of such networks being present within vicinity of domestic structures: Expert

such locations.

"The incident will have a serious impact for properties at nearby locations as the property value will deteriorate. It is imperative for the government to restore the confidence of the people who live in the vicinity of gas pipelines as they are now living in fear."

Fernandez, who was a local councillor for 13 years, said such fire incidents can be prevented if a common utility tunnel system is used in existing or new projects that are located near gas pipelines due to its resistance against corrosion.

"The system should be used in all projects nearby gas pipelines and new

areas to ensure minimal digging for laying of utilities and future disruption of roads and land. This was done in Putrajaya and inserted in the Kwasa Damansara, Petaling Jaya local plan. By using the common utility tunnel, no further excavation works are needed."

Fernandez questioned the action by the local council on claims by a resident of gas fumes in the area before the incident occurred.

"When a complaint has been lodged, it is standard procedure for the local council to investigate and send a team to the ground. The owner of the gas pipeline would also have to be informed so that a response team can be despatched to the location."

"Monitoring equipment may need to be set up and reports made and the complainant informed since a gas leak is a serious matter," he said, adding that local authorities, including health departments should also be involved.

Alliance for a Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye agrees with Fernandez, and said any complaints of significant issues must be investigated by the relevant authority, especially when a formal complaint has been lodged.

"When a resident has lodged a report to the relevant authority, especially involving the aspect of public health and safety, then it is the duty of the authority to investigate the matter."

Lee added that the Putra Heights inferno should serve as a wake-up call and a harsh lesson that the safety of the people must never be overlooked.

On April 1, a catastrophic gas pipeline explosion in Putra Heights affected around 200 houses and displaced over 300 residents.



COMFORTING PRESENCE ... Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa consoling Putra Heights resident Rokiah Othman during her visit to Putrajaya Hospital yesterday.

—BERNAMAPIC

Snakes, turtle and hamster saved

KUALA LUMPUR: In addition to cats and dogs, two snakes, a turtle, fish and a hamster, were rescued from the site of the gas pipeline fire in Putra Heights.

Selangor chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) general manager Kelvin Cheah said 15 cats and three dogs were treated with help from various groups, while the two snakes were returned to their owners.

The rescue operation was coordinated by SPCA Selangor, the Stray Animal Association of Malaysia (SAFM), Animal Kindness Coalition (AKC) and volunteer groups.

"Animals rescued with the help of the fire department and NGOs will be stabilised at our treatment centre before being returned to their owners or referred to vets if needed." The Sri Maha Kaliyamman Temple, which was initially a treatment centre for fire victims, is now housing affected animals for care before they are transferred to veterinary clinics.

—Bernama



NRD receives 5,500 Mekar applications

PUTRAJAYA: The National Registration Department (NRD) has received 5,523 applications for personal identification documents through the Menyemai Kasih Rakyat (Mekar) programme as of February.

Its director-general Badrul Hisham Alias said 5,013 field advisory services were also provided through the implementation of 358 Mekar series nationwide.

"The states that recorded a high number of applications through Mekar are Sarawak and Sabah. Most of the applications are for identity cards, including new ones and replacement of lost or damaged identity cards, as well as birth registrations," he said.

On the Mekar programme, he said it was previously known as the NRD Outreach programme, adding that it is divided into five categories, namely Mekar Ihsan, Mekar Community, Mekar Identity, Mekar Pahlawan and Mekar Diaspora, with the objective of serving the elderly, persons with disabilities, infirm individuals, the mentally ill and those who are unable to physically present at NRD offices. — Bernama

Malacca first to host Madani Aidilfitri event

MALACCA: The state government here is the first state to host the Madani Aidilfitri 2025 celebration, to be held at the Melaka International Trade Centre (MITC) in Ayer Keroh today.

It will be a national-level event and will be officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The event, to be held from 10am to 4pm, is organised in collaboration with the state government and the National Unity Ministry as the lead ministry to foster a spirit of unity among people of various races and backgrounds.

Themed "Ihsan Menyentuh Jiwa, Toleransi Menyatu Negara", the event upholds the values of kindness and the spirit of tolerance as the basis for unity in diversity and serves as a platform to celebrate the diversity of Malaysian culture and strengthen the values of harmony and well-being in society.

Visitors will also be served various cuisine symbolising the diversity of Malaysians, such as *nasi briyani*, *dim sum*, *capati*, *wantan*, *dumplings*, *kambing golek* and *satay*. — Bernama

Concerted efforts needed to curb open burning

➤ Expert suggests using Asean platform to discuss issue affecting region

JELI: Malaysia should act as a facilitator in sharing expertise and experience among Asean countries to address the issue of open burning in the region.

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) Faculty of Earth Sciences associate professor Dr Norrimi Rosaída Awang said it is essential to manage open burning effectively.

She said if not correctly

handled, the consequences could affect not only the country concerned but also neighbouring nations.

She added that one of the most significant impact observed in the past was air quality decline due to haze, Bernama reported.

"As Asean Chair, Malaysia has the advantage of elevating this issue to the regional level. The Asean Summit could serve as a platform for representatives from member countries to seek solutions with the assistance of relevant experts.

"Malaysia could also learn from countries which have succeeded in addressing the problem, such as

Singapore and Thailand, which have enforced stringent laws to combat open burning.

"These measures could be studied and adapted according to our country's needs," she said when met at the UMK Jeli Campus recently.

Norrimi also said air pollution affects not just health, causing respiratory issues and irritation to the skin and eyes, but also disrupts daily activities.

She said haze caused by open burning could also impact the aviation sector, as seen in 2019 when six flights at the Sultan Azlan Shah Airport in Perak were cancelled due to severe haze.

One of the key topics

that could be discussed at the regional level is the need for an early detection system to identify burning incidents more swiftly, she added.

"If fires could be detected earlier, control and extinguishing measures could be carried out faster and more effectively, thereby reducing the (impact)."

She said the UMK Jeli Campus had developed an air quality monitoring station that continuously evaluates air pollution levels in Malaysia.

"With innovations like this, public health quality could be enhanced, and the risks of haze and its adverse effects could be reduced. However, Malaysia currently only has 65 air quality monitoring stations, with just two in Kelantan, one in Kota Bharu and another in Tanah Merah."



Norrimi said air pollution affects not just health but could also impact the aviation sector. — MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN

More discussions on insurance premium hikes

KUALA LUMPUR: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) will conduct five more closed proceedings this month regarding the increase in health insurance premiums, private hospital charges and the impact on public health before preparing a comprehensive report for presentation during the parliamentary session in June.

PAC member Sim Tze Tzin said two public hearings and 12 closed proceedings have been conducted since February, involving various stakeholders such as the Finance Ministry, Health Ministry and Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM).

"PAC will be calling several more

stakeholders, including BNM and the Malaysian Medical Council after the festive season, with the aim of improving recommendations."

Sim, who is also Bayan Baru MP, said a total of 17 proceedings and two public hearings have been held to gather feedback from the public.

"In May, we will prepare a detailed and comprehensive report before presenting it to Parliament in June.

"We hope this report would assist the government in formulating policies that benefit the people."

Meanwhile, the price display requirement for private clinics and hospitals will come into force on May 1, in line with the healthcare

services pricing transparency policy.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dzulkefly Ahmad was reported as saying that with the practice, charges for medications in insurance claims can be verified to ensure the prices do not exceed the displayed prices and also ensure medication charges are not arbitrarily increased.

Since last year, the insurance and *takaful* industry has attracted attention due to a sharp rise in medical premiums, reported to be between 40% and 70%, following claims of high medical costs.

This issue has caught the attention of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who has

directed BNM and the Health Ministry to make decisions regarding control mechanisms to ensure premium increases are justified and do not burden the people.

In December, BNM announced four interim measures to provide temporary support to address the effects of insurance and medical *takaful* premium adjustments.

These include implementing premium adjustments through distribution for a minimum of three years until the end of 2026 and a temporary deferral for premium adjustments for policyholders aged 60 and above for one year from their policy anniversary. — Bernama

Smart team enduring stifling heat in Myanmar

KUALA LUMPUR: Hot weather, with temperatures reaching up to 41°C and dusty conditions are among challenges facing the Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (Smart) conducting post-earthquake victim recovery operations in the Sagaing district, Myanmar.

Smart Training Unit head senior

fire superintendent II Mohamad Hafiezul Abdul Halim said the unstable communication network at the site was another factor hindering search and rescue activities.

"Apart from that, the condition of the collapsed buildings is (precarious), so we need (to find) the best way to enter and (retrieve) each victim.

However, we are giving (it) our best," he said during a live broadcast on Bernama TV's *Ruang Bicara* programme on Thursday.

According to Mohamad Hafiezul, the team has been receiving excellent cooperation from local authorities in Myanmar, as well as appreciation from residents in the affected areas.

"From morning to evening, the base of operations receives visits by the surrounding residents who come bringing drinking water and just to say thank you. It's the same at the work site. They would come with drinking water and offer to help."

A total of 50 Smart members are in Myanmar on a humanitarian mission.

The team has managed to extricate seven victims from under the rubble, including one survivor.

A 7.7-magnitude quake hit Myanmar last Friday, with Mandalay, Bago, Magway, northeastern Shan State, Sagaing and Naypyidaw being the worst-hit areas, while Thailand was also affected. — Bernama

Call for stricter measures to curb double-parking bane

► Use of surveillance cameras, increased patrols, towing of vehicles and penalties could act as strong deterrents, says academic

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
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PETALING JAYA: The persistent issue of double parking in both commercial and residential areas continues to worsen traffic congestion, create serious road safety hazards and hinder emergency response efforts.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Road Safety Research Centre head Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua told *theSun* that from a safety standpoint, double parking forces vehicles to manoeuvre unpredictably, increasing the likelihood of crashes, particularly rear-end collisions.

"It also obstructs visibility for both drivers and pedestrians, making it harder to anticipate hazards. Drivers may be forced to drive against traffic, creating dangerous situations that could lead to crashes," he said.

Law also highlighted that emergency service vehicles, such as ambulances and fire trucks, rely on unobstructed roads to respond swiftly.

"When emergency services cannot reach the scene of a collision or fire in a timely manner, the consequences can be severe, including loss of life, injury or destruction of property," he said.

Law emphasised that double parking significantly reduces road capacity, leading to severe bottlenecks.

"Vehicles navigating around illegally parked cars must make (erratic) lane changes, slowing down overall traffic flow and increasing travel times," he said.

To combat the problem, Law outlined several measures that could be implemented.

"One key solution is increasing parking availability by developing more public parking lots and designated on-street parking while enforcing time limits in high traffic areas," he said.

He also stressed the need for stricter enforcement by the local councils, adding that the use of surveillance cameras, increased patrols and immediate towing of double-parked vehicles could act as strong deterrents.

"Consistent fines and penalties would discourage repeat offenders," he said, adding that more public awareness campaigns should be held.

"Many drivers underestimate the

dangers of double parking. Educating motorists about the risks and promoting alternatives like car-pooling, public transport and shared parking spaces could lead to behavioural change," Law said.

He also suggested that a well-planned urban area with efficient public transport and sufficient parking spaces could minimise the need for residents to park on the streets.

"Encouraging pedestrian-friendly spaces and reducing reliance on private vehicles could also help curb double parking," he said.

Law also urged the government to prioritise multi-level parking structures in high-density commercial and residential areas.

He cited countries such as Singapore and Hong Kong, where strict enforcement and improved infrastructure have successfully reduced double parking.

"Singapore employs a high-tech parking management system, varying parking charges by location and imposing strict fines for

violations.

"In Hong Kong, there are more designated parking zones and enhanced public transport options, which have helped curb illegal parking," said Law.

Food trader Ravi Subramaniam, 42, said double parking has affected his business in Bangsar.

"Customers struggle to find proper parking space due to double parking by irresponsible drivers."

Pantai Dalam area residents also face double parking issues at their flats.

"In the evenings, cars are parked haphazardly, blocking entryways and making it difficult for emergency vehicles to pass," said customer service executive Nurul Farhana Mohd Azam, 26.

"I once saw an ambulance struggle to get through a narrow road because cars were double-parked on both sides.

"It was heartbreaking to think that someone in need of urgent medical attention might have been delayed due to selfish parking habits," she said.



Law said one key solution is increasing parking availability by developing more public lots and designated on-street parking while enforcing time limits in high traffic areas.

— ADAM AMIR
HAMZAH/THESUN

Police tracking down runaway driver in fatal crash case

IPOH: Perak police are tracking down the runaway driver of a car believed to have run over a pregnant woman involved in a crash at Km264.7 of the North-South Expressway (PLUS) heading south, near the Menora Tunnel in Ipoh on Sunday.

Perak police chief Datuk Noor Hisam Nordin said police and PLUS were still tracking down the unknown vehicle, and further investigations were being carried

out, including into an allegation that the victim's belongings were stolen during the incident.

"We are still investigating and looking for (the driver). Police and PLUS are trying to identify the vehicle's plate number through CCTV," said Noor Hisam.

He said police expressed hope that the driver would come forward to assist in the investigation.

Earlier, a video of a vehicle

running over Nur Fatimah Badrul Hisyam, 25, who was eight months pregnant, was widely shared on social media.

Nur Fatimah was involved in an earlier crash when the car she was travelling in with her husband and child skidded at the scene.

Nur Fatimah and the child, who was about two years old, were killed.

From the video, it is believed that the vehicle did not stop to help but

sped on.

Meanwhile, Ipoh district police chief ACP Abang Zainal Abidin Abang Ahmad said the case was being investigated under Section 41(1) of the Road Transport Act 1987.

Police have urged anyone with information related to the case to contact investigating officer Inspector Mohamad Faiz Abdul Khalim at 018-372 8477. — Bernama

Director loses RM5.5m in forex scam

SHAH ALAM: A company director suffered RM5.5 million in losses after falling prey to a foreign currency exchange (forex) scam.

Selangor police chief Datuk Hussein Omar Khan said the victim was acquainted with the suspect, who is from Sarawak. He had previously conducted several small currency exchanges, converting Malaysian ringgit to Vietnamese dong for salary payments and business operations in Vietnam.

"In late March 2025, the victim conducted a large-scale currency exchange for RM6.5 million. However, to date, he has only received RM900,000 worth of Vietnamese dong," Hussien told Bernama.

"He was instructed to make 15 transfers to seven different bank accounts, totaling RM6.5 million. The scam became apparent when the suspect avoided paying the balance," he said in a statement.

The public is advised to exercise caution when dealing with foreign currency exchanges, and to only transact with entities registered with Bank Negara Malaysia.

Lorry driver injured in panther attack

SEREMBAN: A lorry driver in his 50s was injured yesterday in a panther attack while relieving himself along Jalan Bukit Tangga-Seremban in Jelebu.

Negeri Sembilan Wildlife Protection and National Parks Department director Faizal Izham Pikri confirmed receiving reports of the incident, including a video, at 6.15pm.

"The victim was attacked on the head by a panther, which emerged from a nearby forest before fleeing into the woods. He was quickly taken to Tuanku Ja'afar Hospital for treatment," he said in a statement.

Faizal also urged road users to remain vigilant when travelling along known wildlife corridors, and to contact authorities immediately if they encounter wild animals.

Earlier, a 16-second video circulating on social media showed the black panther running back into the jungle shortly after the attack. — Bernama

Man dies after fall from 22nd floor

GEORGE TOWN: A 27-year-old man was found dead at an apartment complex in Gat Lebuah Macallum here on Thursday, after allegedly falling from the 22nd floor.

A video of the incident was widely shared on social media.

Northeast district deputy police chief Supt Lee Swee Sake said police were informed about the incident at 5.07pm.

"Investigation found no criminal elements at the scene or on the body, and checks found that the victim is a resident at the apartment," — Bernama

Trafficking ring crippled, drugs worth RM16 million seized

KUALA LUMPUR: Police have crippled a cross-border drug trafficking syndicate with the seizure of methamphetamine worth RM16 million in raids in Selangor last week.

Bukit Aman Narcotics Criminal Investigation Department acting director DCP Mat Zani @ Mohd Salahuddin Che Ali said this followed the arrest of two local men after police stopped their car at 7.20am in

Subang Jaya.

"Police searched the car and found six sacks containing 150 packages of methamphetamine weighing 156kg in the rear passenger seat and boot of the car."

"Following the arrest of the two suspects, police raided a homestay in the same area that was used as a store, and seized 12 sacks containing 300 packages of drugs weighing

312kg," he said at the Bukit Aman police headquarters here yesterday.

Mat Zani added that another raid was conducted on the same day at a warehouse in Taman Bukit Permai, Ampang, which led to the discovery of two more sacks containing the same type of drug weighing 51kg.

"The syndicate is believed to have been active since September last year and rented premises, such as a

homestay, daily to store drugs before distributing them to the local and overseas markets.

Mat Zani said the seized drugs are believed to have been brought into Malaysia from a neighbouring country.

Both suspects tested negative for drugs. One of them had a record for an offence under Section 76 of the Excise Act 1976. — Bernama

Tuna landing hub boost to Penang economy

GEORGE TOWN: Apart from its renowned street food and scenic beaches, Penang holds a unique distinction as Malaysia's only tuna landing hub, where prized catches from the Indian Ocean arrive before being exported to international markets.

These tuna, caught in the vast Indian Ocean, are carefully chilled and shipped to several countries, particularly Japan, where they are used for premium *sashimi* – one of the world's most sought-after delicacies.

State Agrotechnology, Food Security and Cooperative Development Committee chairman Fahmi Zainol highlighted that Penang has been the main entry point for tuna in Malaysia since the early 1990s.

"Many foreign vessels choose Penang as their landing site before processing and exporting the tuna to Taiwan or Japan."

He said tuna landings bring significant economic benefits, supporting local industry players while boosting Malaysia's seafood trade.

With the increase in tuna landing activities, Fahmi believes Penang has the potential to develop a strong downstream industry, creating more jobs and attracting investments.

"If we expand the tuna industry, it can create job opportunities not only in fisheries but also in related sectors such as fish processing, transportation and trade," he told Bernama.

Penang does not have a dedicated tuna processing industry. However, Fahmi is optimistic that with an increase in landings, the state could emerge as a key hub for tuna processing, supplying premium seafood products to both local and international markets.

Apart from fisheries, he said the tuna industry could also boost tourism, particularly in areas where tuna landings and trade activities take place.

"If well-developed, jetties and processing facilities could attract more visitors, as tuna landing operations are often a unique spectacle that draws public interest," he said.

Tuna remains a high-value commodity in international markets, and Penang's role as a major landing hub is crucial to the industry's expansion.

Reviving Wayang Kulit with a modern touch

KUALA LUMPUR: Concerns over the declining popularity of *Wayang Kulit* (traditional shadow puppet show) have driven three artistes to take an innovative approach to ensure the heritage art remains relevant, particularly among the young generation.

Founded in 2012 by Muhammad Dain Othman and his two partners Tintoy Chuo and Teh Take Huat, Fusion Wayang Kulit blends traditional Kelantanese *Wayang Kulit* with modern elements, introducing new storytelling and iconic characters from popular culture to attract audiences.

Muhammad Dain, 73, a 13th-generation *Tok Dalang* (puppet master) of traditional Kelantanese Malay *Wayang Kulit*, said shifting audience interests motivated them to innovate while

► New storytelling approach and popular iconic characters infused into traditional Kelantanese shadow puppet show to rekindle public interest, attract young generation

preserving the original format of the art form.

"Kelantanese *Wayang Kulit* is fading due to a lack of interest, especially among young people," he told Bernama at the Fusion Wayang Kulit gallery at creative community mall GMBB in Bukit Bintang.

Fusion Wayang Kulit's first attempt at introducing a modern touch began by creating characters from the Star Wars franchise, including Darth Vader,

Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia Organa, C-3PO, Stormtroopers and the Star Destroyer Spaceship, with their first performance held in 2013.

The debut performance was well received, opening doors for international showcases in Germany, Australia, China and Japan.

Muhammad Dain said despite incorporating modern elements, they remained committed to preserving the traditional

Kelantanese *Wayang Kulit* format by maintaining its five key characteristics – music, language or dialogue, performance, puppetry and characters.

Muhammad Dain said his team also conducts workshops to train the younger generation in *Wayang Kulit*.

Initially, Fusion Wayang Kulit faced resistance from traditionalists who believed their innovations compromised the authenticity of *Wayang Kulit*.

However, after a clear explanation of the concept, many came to understand and accept it, he said.

To date, Fusion Wayang Kulit has created shadow puppet designs of various characters inspired by DC superheroes (Justice League), Sony PlayStation video games (Horizon Forbidden West, God of War, The Last of Us, Ratchet & Clank, Ghost of Tsushima), Japanese mecha (Evangelion, Zaku from Gundam), Tokusatsu (Ultraman, Kamen Rider) and Venom.

The Fusion Wayang Kulit team, consisting of about 20 members – including graphic designers, musicians, sound engineers, projection supervisors and the puppet master has also performed in Singapore, Thailand, Japan, China, Austria and Germany.

They were also invited to give a lecture at Pixar Animation Studios in California in the United States.

Fusion Wayang Kulit is also involved in puppet making and *Wayang Kulit* performances at an exhibition titled "A Life in Shadows: The Story of Wayang Kulit", currently being at the Asian Art Museum at Universiti Malaya until April 30.



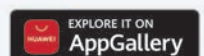
Muhammad Dain said his team also conducts workshops to train the younger generation in the art of *Wayang Kulit*.
– BERNAMAPIC

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Ipoh ratepayers win prizes from council

■ BY P. CHANDRA SAGARAN
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

IPOH: It was a happy day for a 76-year-old housewife who received a Perodua Bezza 1.0G worth RM34,000 as the grand prize in the Ipoh City Council's lucky draw for assessment ratepayers.

Speaking during the event held at the council's office recently, Ng Mee Sin who lives with her husband in Chateau Garden said she never expected to be the winner.

"We already have a car in the house and all our children are working in Kuala Lumpur.

"I want to sell the car. I am not driving anymore and did not renew my licence some time back," she told reporters after receiving the mock key from Mayor Datuk Rumaizi Baharin Md Daud.

Ng praised the council's initiative to reward ratepayers who settle their dues with prizes.

► Lucky draw treat for those who settle one-year assessment payments

Her husband Lee Thart Wah, 84, had paid the full year's bill at the council's office at the Urban Transformation Centre (UTC) here.

"We decided to pay in one go. Otherwise, we would have to come twice to make payments," she said.

In second place, winner Kok Chin Hong, 49, from the Pengkalan area, grabbed a motorcycle. He quipped that he was expecting the car as his prize.

"It's okay. I am happy as I won a motorcycle which I will use. There is already a motorcycle at home," said Kok, who is involved in selling prayer items.

They were among 28 residents who emerged winners in the main draw on March 19. The first round of winners for 228 prizes

were drawn through a digital process on March 6.

Rumaizi said in his speech this is the second year that the council is offering a car and other items as prizes for those paying up the one-year assessment rate.

"The lucky draw is a show of appreciation by the council to ratepayers who fulfil their responsibilities to the city," he said. "In the past, prizes were given only in cash due to the Covid-19 pandemic."

This year the council has offered 228 lucky draw prizes in the form of cash, electrical items and the road vehicles worth a total of RM100,000.

The council recorded 131,272 assessment bills with payments amounting to RM60.79 million this year.



Rumaizi with Ng during the prize presentation ceremony. — P. CHANDRA SAGARAN/THESUND



Sona (left), Saraswathy (4th left) and Vijayalakshmy (sixth left) with some of the nominees at the event.

Celebrating and empowering Indian 'womenpreneurs' in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: Business AddA, a women entrepreneurs' network, recently hosted the Atmanirbhar Bharati Awards 2025 to celebrate the remarkable contributions of Indian "womenpreneurs" in Malaysia.

The ceremony, held on March 21 at the Shenga Auditorium, marked Business AddA's third anniversary.

Under the theme "Women Entrepreneur Stories: Innovating for Tomorrow," the event highlighted inspirational journeys of women shaping the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Sona Ghose, founder and managing partner of Business AddA, said: "This event is not just a celebration of individual achievements; it is a collective acknowledgement of the resilience and ingenuity of women entrepreneurs who continue to redefine success in Malaysia and beyond."

"At Business AddA, we believe in the power of community, innovation and diversity to drive sustainable growth and meaningful change."

Present as guest of honour was National Unity Deputy Minister Saraswathy Kandasami while the Indian High Commission's culture director Vijayalakshmy Sunderrajan acted as chief guest.

Other eminent guests were Lata Bavisi, president of EC-Council; Datin Malliga Subramaniam, accelerator of startups in India and Malaysia; and Datin Sri Shaila Nair, an accomplished actress and movie producer.

Awards were presented for outstanding achievements in nine categories.

The recipients were Kinnar Singh of The.Dot.Way (arts category); Shameena Abdurahman of Golden Loop Academy and Services (education); Shanmugaselvi Rajagopal of Swans Weddings (event management); Chandra Kumari Govinathan of Nadia Veg Café (food and beverage); Raji Bedi of Bellibon (fashion); Jennifer Ahluwalia of Sociojenics (marketing); Dhanashree Deshpande of Tinscapesbyrne (services); and Dr. Noraisha Mohammad Anwar of MBA Centre (wellness).

Madhavi Murali, Narupa Roy, Anju Purohit and Saroj Avalani were honoured in the community service category.

The event also saw a creative showcase spotlighting entrepreneurial artistry, presented by DesiGlam.

For details on Business AddA's initiatives, visit www.klbusinessadda.com or contact klbusinessadda@gmail.com.

Movie night to raise funds, awareness on World Rare Disease Day

PETALING JAYA: In conjunction with World Rare Disease Day, which fell on February 29, the Malaysia Lysosomal Diseases Association (MLDA), in collaboration with Passionate World Sdn Bhd and eMuse Pictures, hosted a private charity screening of Joey Lee's debut film *My Parents' Midlife Crisis*.

The event brought together advocates, families and supporters to raise funds and awareness for rare diseases, while celebrating the resilience of individuals and families navigating life's challenges.

"Rare disease families face extraordinary battles daily, and through initiatives like this, we amplify their voices and push for tangible change," said MLDA president Lee Yee Seng. "Every ringgit raised brings us closer to bridging the critical RM20 million funding gap for life-saving treatments."

My Parents' Midlife Crisis is a poignant and humorous exploration of family dynamics, personal passions and societal expectations.

Set in a conservative Asian family, the story follows 13-year-old Velonica as she navigates her parents' midlife crises while

grappling with her own growing pains.

Joey Lee, its director, scriptwriter and producer, said: "I believe film has the power to inspire change and create a better world."

"Since founding Passionate World in 2016, I have been committed to making a meaningful impact through storytelling. With my debut film, I hope to contribute to a more inclusive society."

It was noted that parents and caregivers of rare disease patients face immense challenges, from managing medical needs to balancing emotional and financial burdens.

Currently, Lysosomal Storage Diseases (LSD) patients are facing serious under-dosing of enzyme treatments due to limited government funding, with a total shortfall of RM20 million.

"The under-dosing crisis is a ticking time bomb," said Yee Seng. "Without full treatment regimens, patients risk irreversible deterioration."

"We urge the government to prioritise this issue. It's not just a budget line item, but a lifeline for our community."



Participants at the cinema during the exclusive movie screening.



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US academic faces royal insult charges

BANGKOK: Thai police summoned a prominent American academic yesterday to face charges of insulting the monarchy, a rare case of a foreign national being charged under the kingdom's strict lese-majesty law.

The army filed a complaint against Paul Chambers, a lecturer at Naresuan University in northern Thailand and respected authority on the kingdom's politics, over comments he made in an online discussion.

Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his close family are protected from criticism by the lese-majesty law, with each offence punishable by up to 15 years in jail.

Charges under the law have increased dramatically in recent years and critics say it is misused to stifle legitimate debate.

According to a police summons, Chambers is accused of "insulting or showing malice towards the king, queen, heir to the throne, or regent", as well as "introducing counterfeit computer data that could threaten national security".

Chambers said the charge stems from remarks he made during a webinar held last year in which he discussed the relationship between the military and the monarchy during a question-and-answer session.

"I believe I'm the first non-Thai in years to face this charge," he said by phone.

He said that while he felt "intimidated" by the situation, he was being supported by the US embassy and colleagues at the university.

Sunai Phasuk of Human Rights Watch said police in Phitsanulok province agreed not to detain Chambers immediately. — AFP

Tourist arrested for landing on forbidden island

NEW DELHI: Indian police said they had arrested a US tourist who sneaked onto a highly restricted island carrying a coconut and a can of Diet Coke to a tribe untouched by the modern world.

Mykhailo Viktorovych Polyakov, 24, set foot on the restricted territory of North Sentinel, part of India's Andaman Islands, in a bid to meet the Sentinelese people, who are believed to number only around 150.

All outsiders are banned from within 5km of the island to protect the indigenous people from diseases and to preserve their way of life.

"The American citizen was presented before the local court after his arrest and is now on a three-day remand for further interrogation," said Andaman and Nicobar Islands police chief HGS Dhalliwal.

Satellite photographs show a coral reef-fringed island stretching to some 10km at its widest point with thick forest and sandy beaches.

The Sentinelese last made headlines in 2018 after they killed John Allen Chau, 27, a missionary who landed illegally on their beach.

Chau's body was not recovered and there were no investigations over his death. — AFP

Myanmar head attends Bangkok summit

Earthquake toll tops 3,100

BANGKOK: Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Min Aung Hlaing attended a regional summit here yesterday, a week after a massive earthquake devastated parts of the impoverished country, killing more than 3,100, and spurring an appeal for help by the UN chief.

Shunned by most world leaders since leading a 2021 coup that overthrew an elected government, Min Aung Hlaing's rare trip exploits a window opened by the earthquake to ramp up diplomacy at events such as the BIMSTEC summit.

On the sidelines, Min Aung Hlaing had meetings with Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Amid the quake recovery effort, Min Aung Hlaing will talk about "the potential for cooperation ... to carry out rescue, relief and rehabilitation," the *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper said.

The death toll from last week's earthquake of magnitude 7.7 climbed to 3,145, with more than 4,500 injured and more than 200 missing.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "I appeal for every effort to transform this tragic moment into an opportunity for the people of Myanmar."

Min Aung Hlaing also met Nepal's prime minister on Thursday, ahead of the summit focused on technical and economic matters.

He sat between the prime ministers of Bhutan and Sri Lanka at the head table during Thursday's dinner with heads of BIMSTEC nations, Thai government photographs show.

In a post on X after meeting Min

Aung Hlaing, Modi said cooperation on connectivity, capacity building and infrastructure development featured in their discussions.

With the Thai prime minister, he discussed disaster prevention, transnational crime and repatriation of those pulled out of scam centres, Thai officials said.

The summit is part of BIMSTEC or the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, which groups Thailand, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

Even before the quake, millions had suffered in Myanmar's widening civil war, triggered by the coup that ousted the government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

It has decimated the mainly agrarian economy, driven more than 3.5 million people from their homes and crippled essential services such as healthcare.

Myanmar's neighbours, such as

China, India and Southeast Asian nations are among the countries that despatched relief supplies and rescuers to aid the recovery effort in quake-hit areas, home to about 28 million people.

Extreme heat and forecast heavy rain could cause disease outbreaks among survivors camping in the open, as the risk of cholera grows in such areas, namely Mandalay, Sagaing and Naypyidaw.

"Response efforts still face significant logistical challenges ... hampering the relief response," the World Food Programme said on Thursday. Hurdles range from debris and damaged roads and facilities to telecoms disruption, it said.

This week the government called a ceasefire from Wednesday to April 22 in operations against armed opponents, reflecting moves by a major rebel alliance and Myanmar's shadow government that groups parts of the previous administration. — Reuters

Civilians rush aid to quake victims

SAGAING: A young shopkeeper with little money of her own, Ei Hay Mar Hlaing, has delivered more help to victims at the epicentre of Myanmar's earthquake than most aid organisations.

When the 21-year-old saw the carnage the 7.7-magnitude tremor had inflicted on the city of Sagaing in central Myanmar, she decided to act.

"My friends and I gathered our pocket money and asked for donations," she said at her impromptu distribution site.

"We donated what we had."

They loaded a lorry with drinking water, noodles, energy drinks and

electrolytes, plus first-aid kits, and headed to the disaster zone from their homes in Monywa, about 110km away.

In matching white helmets, she and eight of her friends handed out supplies in a field next to a school in Sagaing.

Scores of would-be recipients whose homes have been destroyed or made uninhabitable packed tightly together, hoping to secure a share of the goods.

Lwin Myint, 56, was looking for help for her family of six.

"I came here to see if I can get some snacks and water. Now, we do not have a place to live," she said.

"We haven't received anything except some packets of rice and curry, and water as we queue. I want some rice and oil if possible."

Another woman walked away with two bottles of water and a few packs of noodles, looking slightly dazed.

A tattooed militiaman armed with an assault rifle paced between the queues of mostly women to maintain order.

Over several days in the disaster zone, journalists have not seen soldiers actively taking part in rescue or aid efforts, aside from one group putting up tents for the displaced around Mandalay Palace.

International rescue teams, many of them Chinese, have been working at disaster sites in Mandalay, but in neighbouring Sagaing, organisation logos are remarkably absent.

Instead, the road to the city was jammed with civilian aid convoys from neighbouring regions, draped with banners declaring the aid was sent to victims by their fellow Burmese.

"Myanmar has been experiencing earthquakes, flood, fire and bombing. I am sad to see them," said Ei Hay Mar Hlaing, wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with "Believe Yourself".

"I want everyone to be okay. I want international communities to help us as much as they can," she said.

At a World Food Programme site in the city — the only international aid distribution AFP saw in Sagaing on Thursday — bags of rice, boxes of fortified biscuits and bottles of sunflower oil were being handed out.

"The situation is devastating" in Sagaing, said the UNDP's Resident Representative for Myanmar Titon Mitra, who estimated 80% of buildings had been damaged, "50% probably severely".

"The markets are inoperable, the hospitals are overwhelmed, the structural integrity of the hospital is compromised, so everyone is outside."

The hospital's medical director told Mitra he had received no international assistance.

"This is a crisis on top of a crisis on top of a crisis. The economy had collapsed, people's coping mechanisms had collapsed and on top of that, you have this earthquake."

"So, the short answer is that needs are immense." — AFP



A damaged pagoda in Mandalay. — REUTERS/SPIC

Yoon removed from office, election looms

► Prime minister to serve as acting president

SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was ousted yesterday by the Constitutional Court, ushering in an election after it upheld parliament's impeachment over Yoon's imposition of martial law that sparked the nation's worst political crisis in decades.

The decision sets in motion a race to elect the next president within 60 days as required by the constitution. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo will stay on as acting president until a new leader is sworn in.

Lee Jae-myung, the populist leader of the liberal Democratic Party who had lost to Yoon by a razor-thin margin in 2022, is a clear front-runner but faces legal challenges under trials for corruption.

The conservatives have a wide-open field of candidates.

"The Constitutional Court's unanimous ruling has removed a major source of uncertainty," said Professor Leif-Eric Easley of Ewha University in Seoul.

Acting Chief Justice Moon Hyung-bae said Yoon violated his duty as president with his Dec 3 martial law declaration, acting beyond his constitutional powers with actions that were "a serious challenge to democracy".

"(Yoon) committed a grave betrayal of the people's trust," Moon said, adding that Yoon's declaration of martial law created chaos in all areas of society, the economy and foreign policy.

Human Rights Watch called the ruling a win for the country's resilience, quest for human rights and democratic values.

Thousands of people at a rally calling for Yoon's ouster, including hundreds who had camped out overnight, erupted into wild cheers on hearing the ruling, chanting "We won!"

"This took a long time but it's fortunate that it is a sensible outcome," said Kim Han-sol, a 23-year-old student at a rally.

Supporters of Yoon who were gathered near his official residence watched the ruling on a big screen in stunned silence. Some reacted in anger, with one protester arrested for smashing a police bus window, the Yonhap news agency reported. Others held their heads in their hands and wept.

In a message released through his lawyers, Yoon apologised to South Koreans.

"I am so sorry and regretful that I wasn't



Anti-Yoon protesters reacting after the verdict yesterday. — AFP/PPIC

able to live up to your expectations."

Earlier, Yoon's lawyers had slammed the court's ruling.

"This can only be seen as a political decision and it's really disappointing," Yoon Kab-keun told reporters. Yoon has been holed up in his official residence since his release from jail on March 8.

The court rejected most of Yoon's argument that he declared martial law to sound the alarm over the main opposition party's abuse of its parliamentary majority, saying there were legal avenues to address disagreements.

Mobilising the military against parliament to disrupt its functions was a grave violation of Yoon's constitutional duty to safeguard the independence of the three branches of government, Moon said.

The presidential flag that flew alongside the national flag at the presidential office was lowered yesterday after the ruling. At military bases and command centres around the country, portraits of Yoon will be taken down to be shredded or burned, according to law.

Kwon Young-se, the interim leader of

Yoon's ruling People Power Party, pledged to work with the acting president to stabilise the country. Acting President Han, speaking after the ruling, said he would do all he could to ensure an orderly election.

The 64-year-old Yoon still faces a criminal trial on insurrection charges related to the martial law declaration which carries a maximum sentence of death or life imprisonment.

The embattled leader became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested on Jan 15 but was released in March after a court cancelled his arrest warrant. Oral arguments in the case start on April 14.

The crisis was triggered by Yoon's surprise late-night declaration that martial law was needed in part to root out "anti-state" elements.

Yoon lifted the decree six hours later after parliamentary staffers used barricades and fire extinguishers to ward off special operations soldiers who arrived by helicopter and broke windows as they sought to enter parliament, where lawmakers voted to reject martial law. — Reuters

National Security Agency chief fired

WASHINGTON: The head of secretive US intelligence body the National Security Agency (NSA) was fired on Thursday.

The *Washington Post* cited US officials who said General Timothy Haugh was fired after little over a year in the job. The officials did not give a reason for Haugh's removal.

Haugh was also serving as head of the US Cyber Command, the Pentagon's cyber warfare body which conducts offensive and defensive cyber operations.

His NSA deputy Wendy Noble was also fired and reassigned to another job at the Pentagon, *The Post* said.

The NSA is the US government's largest and most secretive signals intelligence agency.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Haugh, who was appointed in February last year, previously held a string of high-profile cybersecurity roles, including commander of the elite Cyber National Mission Force.

Democratic Congressman Jim Himes said he was "deeply disturbed" by Haugh's sacking.

Cyber Command's Deputy Commander William J. Hartman and NSA executive director Sheila Thomas have been named acting NSA chief and deputy, *The Post* reported. — AFP

Gunmen held at Melbourne stadium

SYDNEY: Security at Melbourne Cricket Ground will be ramped up after two men were charged over smuggling handguns and bullets into a crowd of over 82,000 Australian Rules fans, police said yesterday.

Victoria police said they arrested the duo, both in their 20s, after they refused to leave the stadium during a match on Thursday.

A police search allegedly revealed the pair were each carrying a handgun and bullets, with one of the weapons already loaded.

Both men were charged with possessing an unregistered handgun and ammunition without a licence.

Police said the incident was not linked to terrorism and there was no threat to the public.

"Last night's incident is extremely disappointing and upsetting," said Melbourne Cricket Club chief executive Stuart Fox.

Despite security screening initially "identifying items of concern", a "breakdown" in further searches allowed the pair to enter the busy stadium, Fox said.

He said security at the stadium would increase the "extensiveness" of manual searches, warning fans to expect delays entering the ground. — AFP

Springsteen to release 'Lost Albums'

NEW YORK: Bruce Springsteen announced on Thursday he will release a boxed set of new music this summer spanning 83 songs.

Tracks II: The Lost Albums is slated to drop June 27, seven complete albums recorded between 1983 and 2018, the Boss said.

"The *Lost Albums* were full records, some of them even to the point of being mixed and not released," Springsteen said.

"I've played this music to myself and often close friends for years now. I'm glad you'll get a chance to finally hear them. I hope you enjoy them."

The 75-year-old released a preview in the form of the track *Rain In The River*, an electrified arena-rock anthem.

In a video clip accompanying the announcement, he said he took advantage of the pandemic to finish "everything I had in my vault".

His forthcoming albums will be released by Sony, which bought the rights to Springsteen's catalogue in 2021. — AFP

Meta could face suit in Kenya over hate-speech posts

NAIROBI: A Kenyan court has ruled that Facebook's parent company Meta can be sued in the East African country over its alleged role in promoting content that led to ethnic violence in neighbouring Ethiopia, a plaintiff in the case said.

The landmark case, which stems from alleged hate speech on the platform during the 2020-2022 civil war in northern Ethiopia's Tigray region, could have implications for how Meta works with content moderators globally.

The company has argued that local courts do not have the power to hear cases against it where it is not registered as a company.

Kenya's High Court rejected that argument in its ruling on Thursday, said the Katiba Institute, which is a plaintiff in the case alongside two Ethiopian researchers.

"The court here has refused to shy away from determining an important global matter,

recognising that homegrown issues must be addressed directly in our courts," said Nora Mbagathi, the institute's executive director.

A Meta spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The plaintiffs allege that Facebook's recommendation systems amplified violent posts in Ethiopia during the Tigray war.

Plaintiff Abraham Meareg alleges that his father, Meareg Amare, was killed in 2021 following threatening posts on Facebook. Fisseha Tekle, an Amnesty International researcher, says he faced online hate for human rights work in Ethiopia.

They are demanding that Meta create a restitution fund for victims of hate and violence and alter Facebook's algorithm to stop promoting hate speech.

Meta has previously said it invested heavily in content moderation and removed hateful

content from the platform.

The case is the third to be brought against Meta in Kenya, where the company also faces lawsuits from content moderators employed by a local contractor who say they faced poor working conditions and were fired for trying to organise a union.

Meta has responded that it requires partners to provide industry-leading conditions.

The company, which had invested billions and hired thousands of content moderators globally over the years to police sensitive content, in January scrapped its US fact-checking program.

It also said at the time that it would stop proactively scanning for hate speech and other types of rule-breaking, reviewing such posts only in response to user reports. — Reuters



'FOOD, HUMANITARIAN AID USED AS WEAPONS'

NEW YORK: UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini has criticised Israel for using food and humanitarian aid as a weapon in Gaza. In a post on X, Lazzarini said Israel has imposed a tight blockade on Gaza for over a month, preventing the entry of essential goods, including food, medicine and fuel. "People are exhausted as they continue to be locked up in a tiny piece of land. Aid must be allowed in and the siege must be lifted." The situation in Gaza worsened dramatically in early March when the military closed the crossings into Gaza Strip. — Bernama

TRUMP, MUSK VOICE SUPPORT FOR LE PEN

PARIS: US President Donald Trump, Vice-President JD Vance and Elon Musk have all voiced their support for French far-right leader Marine Le Pen after she was found guilty of embezzlement and barred from running in France's 2027 presidential election. She was convicted on Monday of misappropriating European Union funds by using the money to pay party officials. She received a four-year prison sentence – two of which are suspended and two to be served under home detention – and a US\$108,200 (RM480,049) fine. She also received an immediate five-year ban on running for office that will prevent her from the 2027 presidential election unless the ruling is overturned next year. — Reuters

US to freeze Brown University grants

WASHINGTON: The US government plans to freeze grants to Brown University and set conditions that Harvard University must meet – including a mask ban and removal of diversity, equity and inclusion programmes – to receive federal money.

The tightening of funding to the universities represents Washington's latest moves to combat what it calls antisemitism on campuses.

Human rights advocates and academic experts have condemned the moves as an assault on free speech and academic freedom. Universities have said they aim to combat discrimination on campus.

A US official, who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity, said the administration's action would block US\$510 million (RM2.3 billion) in grants for Brown, making it the latest academic institution targeted by President Donald Trump. Brown said it had not yet been formally notified.

The conditions to Harvard were revealed in a letter seen by Reuters. Harvard confirmed receiving the letter.

Last month, the US Education Department warned 60 universities, including Brown and Harvard, that it could bring enforcement actions against them over antisemitism allegations.

Princeton University said on Tuesday the government froze several dozen research grants to the school. The Trump administration was reviewing US\$9 billion in federal contracts and grants awarded to Harvard.

Last month, it cancelled US\$400 million in federal funding for Columbia University, which had been the epicentre of pro-Palestinian campus protests. Columbia agreed to significant changes so that it can negotiate to regain the funding.

Trump has threatened to slash federal funding for universities over pro-Palestinian campus protests. — Reuters

Israel expands ground offensive in Gaza

► Hamas commander killed in Lebanon

TEL AVIV: The Israeli military announced the launch of a new ground offensive in Gaza City yesterday to expand the security zone it has established in the Palestinian territory.

Israel has pushed since the collapse of a short-lived truce in the war with Hamas to seize territory in Gaza in what it has called a strategy to force the gunmen to free hostages still in captivity.

Simultaneously, it has escalated attacks on Lebanon and Syria, with a strike in the south Lebanese city of Sidon killing a Hamas commander along with his adult son and daughter, according to the Israeli military.

In Gaza City, the Israeli military said ground troops had begun conducting operations in the Shejaiya area "to expand the security zone".

Defence Minister Israel Katz had said on Wednesday that Israel would bolster its military presence inside the Gaza Strip to "destroy and clear the area of terrorists and terrorist infrastructure".

The operation would "seize large areas that will be incorporated into Israeli security zones", he said, without specifying how much territory.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the army was dividing Gaza and "seizing territory" to force Hamas to free the remaining hostages.

On Thursday, Gaza's civil defence agency said at least 31 people, including children, were killed in an Israeli strike on a school

serving as a shelter for displaced Palestinians.

Agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said women and children were among the dead, while six people were still unaccounted for in the strike on Dar al-Arqam School in the Al-Tuffah neighbourhood, northeast of Gaza City.

"One of the missing was a pregnant woman who was expecting twins," he said.

The Israeli military said it had struck a "Hamas command and control centre in the area of Gaza City".

It was unclear whether it was the same attack that hit the school.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said on Thursday that 1,163 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory since Israel resumed large-scale strikes on March 18, bringing the overall death toll since the war began to 50,523.

In Lebanon, Israel said it killed a Hamas commander in a strike on the port city of Sidon that also killed his adult son and daughter.

"Overnight, the (army and the domestic security agency Shin Bet) conducted a targeted strike in the Sidon area, killing Hassan Farhat, commander of Hamas' western arena in Lebanon," the Israeli military said.

It alleged that Farhat had orchestrated attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians during the hostilities that followed the outbreak of war in Gaza in October 2023.

They included rocket fire on the Israeli town of Safed on Feb 14, 2024 that killed an Israeli soldier, the military said.

An AFP correspondent saw the fourth-floor flat still on fire after the strike, which caused heavy damage to the apartment block and nearby buildings and sparked panic in the densely populated neighbourhood.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam condemned the strike as a "flagrant attack on Lebanese sovereignty" and a breach of the Nov 27 ceasefire in the war between Hezbollah and Israel.

Hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah spiralled into all-out conflict last September, and the group remains a target of Israeli airstrikes despite the ceasefire.

Under the truce, Hezbollah is supposed to redeploy its forces north of the Litani River, about 30km from the Israeli border, and dismantle any remaining military infrastructure in the south.

Israel is supposed to withdraw its forces across the UN-demarcated Blue Line, the de facto border, but has missed two deadlines to do so and continues to hold five positions it deems "strategic".

In Syria, it has conducted strikes on military targets across the country this week, defying a UN warning that such attacks "undermine efforts to build a new Syria" following Bashar al-Assad's ouster. — AFP



Children waiting to receive food at a charity kitchen in Beit Lahia on Thursday. — REUTERS/PIC

Security Council holds emergency meeting

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council held a special session on Thursday to discuss the escalating Israeli aggression against Palestinians.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk expressed grave concern over the siege on Gaza, stating that it could amount to the use of starvation as a method of warfare.

He also voiced his shock over Israel's recent killings of 15 medical and humanitarian workers in Gaza, which he said raised further concerns about potential war crimes.

Turk called for a thorough investigation into these incidents, stressing the need to hold accountable those responsible for

violations of international law.

In his briefing to the council, Turk highlighted that there is nowhere safe to go in Gaza amid Israeli bombardment and half of the territory is now under mandatory evacuation orders or has been declared a no-go zone.

Turk condemned the siege on Gaza, stating that it constitutes "collective punishment" and may be tantamount to using starvation as a war tactic.

He emphasised that the blockade on vital aid and supplies, including food, water, electricity, fuel and medicine, is harming all residents of Gaza.

"We are witnessing a return to the collapse of the social system that

existed before the ceasefire," he said.

Turk also expressed deep concern over "inciteful rhetoric" by senior Israeli officials regarding the seizure and annexation of land and the potential transfer of Palestinians.

He warned that such actions raise serious fears of international crimes and violate the principle of international law against the acquisition of territory by force.

Turk voiced concern about the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where more than 40,000 Palestinians have been displaced and refugee camps have been destroyed.

He reported that illegal settlement expansion "remains relentless", with some ministers

calling for "Israeli sovereignty" over the occupied territories.

He urged for an immediate return to the ceasefire, for unrestricted humanitarian access to all parts of Gaza, and warned of an "increasingly grave risk of horrific crimes being committed in the occupied Palestinian territories".

Turk reminded the Security Council that, under the Geneva Conventions, states are obligated to act when violations of international humanitarian law are committed.

He said the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states parties are responsible for taking action to prevent such crimes when the risk becomes evident. — Bernama



No retaliation against US 'Liberation Day' tariffs

■ BY **HAYATUN RAZAK**
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PUTRAJAYA: The government is not considering retaliatory measures in response to the United States' recently imposed "Liberation Day" tariffs, which include a 24% rate on Malaysian exports, said Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan.

"We are not looking at retaliatory measures. We are engaging in discussions with the US through its institutions and government officials to understand what they are trying to imply, including the possibility of tariff reductions," he said at a media conference on the curtain-raiser dialogue session for Asean finance track meetings yesterday.

Amir Hamzah stressed the importance of calm, coordinated responses when tackling global trade challenges.

"In general, tariffs are a deterrent to world trade. We hope that through good, open dialogue, we can continue to support and promote free trade," he said, adding Malaysia is lucky because it has tailwinds that are helping to push its economic base despite challenges in the global environment.

"But if the whole world trade struggles a little bit, we have to manage that part. But if global trade slows, we must manage that. That's what the government is focused on, negotiating and building strategic links," Amir Hamzah said.

Highlighting Malaysia's economic strengths, he noted that the country has built resilience by diversifying its economic base.

"We have things that are within our control. We're not only dependent on manufacturing and stuff. So that balance gives us better resilience than a lot of other places."

He said Malaysia also benefits from a diversified trade portfolio with the US making up about 15% of Malaysia's total trade, followed by China (12%), the European Union (8%) and Singapore (14-15%).

"If you look at what this government has been trying to do over the last year, year and a half, it's actually trying to broaden it up even further. That's why the trade missions have been going up. Brazil, Egypt, South Africa, Europe and so on, so that we can build better resilience into our system," he explained.

Amir Hamzah said Malaysia is also supported by strong financial institutions.

He cited the GEAR UP initiative, under which government-linked investment companies have committed RM120 billion in domestic investments over five years as a major economic booster.

"That's a huge stimulus to put in. And that

➤ **Government engaging in discussions with Washington to understand what they are trying to imply, including possibility of reductions in duties: Amir Hamzah**



Amir Hamzah speaking at a media conference on the curtain-raiser dialogue session for Asean finance track meetings. — **BERNAMAPIC**

again helps to create momentum domestically," he said.

Amir Hamzah also pointed out that Malaysia's foreign debt remains very low – just under 3% of total debt – thanks to a strong domestic market and robust demand for government and corporate papers.

He observed that despite foreign investors leaving the equity market, there is renewed confidence in Malaysia's bond market.

"Foreign money has come back into Malaysia's bond market. They're comfortable with the Malaysian position, the economic outlook is okay, and stability is in place. So they just switch the asset class – from equity to bonds. Malaysia is still attracting quite a lot of good things."

Furthermore, he said, the government understands the importance of creating a more balanced and inclusive economy that doesn't rely too heavily on just a few sectors or on low-wage labour.

"So one of the key things that we've been trying to do is actually to lift wages in the

country. Because when wages are lifted, people have spending power. When they spend, the economy is also boosted along the way."

He noted that government-linked investment companies have embraced the concept of a living wage, with higher starting points than the national minimum wage.

"We want to ensure enough money is circulating within the economy so that local businesses can prosper."

Going forward, Amir Hamzah said, the government will continue its efforts to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and advance initiatives under the New Industrial Master Plan and the National Semiconductor Strategy to bring in high-value industries.

"Do we need to adjust certain things along the way? Probably. But at least there's clarity and there's positive motion that's happening. And all the FDI that have gotten in have actually started to pay out," he said.

Amir Hamzah pointed to gross domestic product (GDP) data showing signs of momentum with private consumption up, construction seeing double-digit GDP growth, and manufacturing expanding.

"These are the benefits of incoming FDI translating into real economic activity."

At the upcoming meeting, Amir Hamzah said Asean is working to ensure its collective voice is heard while strengthening intra-regional trade.

"The more Asean collaborates internally, the more resilience it builds. While global engagement is necessary, Asean must also do more within its own space than it is doing today," he added.

Amir Hamzah said the free trade agreements Malaysia has entered into, along with efforts to simplify mutual recognition processes, are among the key initiatives being pursued.

"Previously, these were non-tariff barriers. When you impose import duties, access duties or procedural controls, you limit trade fluidity. What Asean has been working on over the years is simplifying these processes and finding common ground – being less protective where shared interests exist. For example, in the automotive sector, we've allowed preferential treatment for inter-Asean trade," he explained.

Capitalise on Paris Airshow, M'sian aerospace companies told

PETALING JAYA: Malaysian aerospace companies have been urged to capitalise on the Malaysia Pavilion at the Paris Airshow 2025 to expand their global footprint.

Malaysia's participation in the international airshow, which will take place from June 16 to 22 at Le Bourget, Paris, will be spearheaded by Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade), in collaboration with National Aerospace Industry Corporation Malaysia (Naico).

The Paris Airshow is a high-impact platform for Malaysian companies to engage with top-tier buyers, learn about the latest market trends, negotiate contracts and explore new opportunities to become part of the global aerospace supply chain.

Matrade will showcase the capabilities of 15 Malaysian companies specialising in aerospace manufacturing, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), system integration, engineering services, education, new space, composites, astronautics and more.

Matrade CEO Datuk Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz emphasised Malaysia's growing prominence in the international aerospace sector, with the export value reaching RM5.74 billion in 2024. Aircraft parts accounted for 83.2% of these exports recording an increase of 20.3% compared to 2023, driven by global demand for fleet modernisation, rising air travel, and the need for more efficient aerospace solutions. Key markets such as China, Indonesia, Singapore, the United States and France have increasingly looked to Malaysia as a reliable and innovative aerospace partner.

He added that Malaysia's aerospace ecosystem, with its strengths in precision engineering, composites, and MRO services, is well-positioned to capitalise on megatrends affecting the industry such as sustainability, digitalisation and advanced manufacturing to offer innovative solutions to meet the evolving needs of the industry.

"Malaysia offers a compelling value proposition as an aerospace hub, supported by a strong local supply chain network, world-class infrastructure and an ecosystem comprising both international and domestic players," he said, adding that Malaysia has the potential to become a preferred sourcing destination for aircraft parts, driven by its well-established ecosystem, adoption of industry best practices, and compliance with global aerospace standards.

Naico Malaysia CEO Professor Shamsul Kamar Abu Samah said Malaysia's aerospace industry is on a strong upward trajectory, with an estimated revenue of RM21.7 billion and a workforce of 29,900 in 2024.

Agape ATP secures jet fuel supply deal from Swiss One Oil & Gas

PETALING JAYA: Nasdaq-listed Agape ATP Corporation (ATPC), through subsidiary ATPC Green Energy Sdn Bhd, has entered into two sale and purchase agreements (SPA) with an aggregate value of about US\$24 billion (RM106 billion) with Swiss One Oil & Gas AG.

In a statement yesterday, the company said the SPA build upon an earlier Initial Corporate Purchase Order (ICPO) signed in February which laid the foundation for the procurement and supply of refined fuels, including Jet Fuel A1 and EN590 10PPM diesel.

The ICPO covered a trial shipment of 100,000

metric tons of EN590 10PPM diesel and one million barrels of Jet Fuel A1. The successful completion of that phase has led to long-term structured agreements between the parties.

Under the terms of the SPA, ATPC Green Energy will supply EN590 10PPM diesel and Jet Fuel A1 to Swiss One over a 12-month period plus rolls and extensions, with an initial trial order comprising 200,000 metric tons of EN590 10PPM diesel and two million barrels of Jet Fuel A1. Upon successful completion of the trial which started last month, the contract will transition into full-scale supply, with weekly

deliveries of 500,000 metric tons of EN590 10PPM diesel and two million barrels of Jet Fuel A1 to meet growing global demand.

All deliveries will be executed through free-on-board procedures at major international ports, ensuring seamless logistics and adherence to international trade protocols.

ATPC founder and global group CEO Professor Datuk Seri Dr How Kok Choong said, "Our initial ICPO with Swiss One Oil & Gas AG was a crucial step in trust and operational efficiency in the oil and gas sector. The transition to a full-scale SPA reflects the

confidence and trust built between our organisations and positions ATPC as a reliable supplier capable of meeting high-volume fuel demands with consistency and quality assurance."

Swiss One Oil and Gas CEO Jeffrey Hattara expressed his gratitude to Swiss One Oil & Gas Asia Pacific Operations president and director Steven Huffman and Swiss One Oil & Gas adviser A Magedaragamage for their efforts and assistance in the Agape venture. Both of them will be onsite to work alongside Agape with the logistics and future operations.

Time for young Malaysians to prioritise retirement planning

► They will be confronting bleak days ahead if they continue to ignore planning for their golden years, experts warn

PETALING JAYA: Experts believe Malaysia's young adults will be confronting a bleak retirement if they continue to ignore planning for their golden years, as most young adults are inadequate where retirement preparedness is concerned.

Retirement communication researcher Dr Steven KC Poh said a good majority of them have ineffective personal financial planning, and as a result do not have enough retirement savings due to the accumulation of excessive amounts of debt and overspending.

He said in the Malaysian context, research indicates that financial literacy levels among the young adult population are still alarmingly low, underscoring the critical need for comprehensive financial education initiatives to address these challenges.

"It is crucial for policymakers, financial institutions and non-governmental organisations in Malaysia to come together and develop a strategic communication framework and implement comprehensive financial education programmes that cater to the unique needs and demographics of our multiracial and multireligious population."

"These programmes should focus on improving financial literacy, fostering future-oriented thinking, and providing individuals with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively plan and save for their retirement," Poh told *SunBiz*.

He added that the Covid-19 pandemic led to a decline in the economy and an increase in the unemployment rate, as many people

had to dig deep into their Employees Provident Fund and other savings to tide them over.

This effectively shaved off significant retirement savings from many Malaysians, young adults included, and building this nest egg up again and being retirement prepared would be an uphill task.

VKA Wealth Planners licensed financial planner Kevin Neoh said for Malaysian young adults, the retirement planning gap extends beyond knowledge.

"It's a deep-seated lack of financial literacy, encompassing behaviours, attitudes, skills, and cultural beliefs. This then manifests as poor cash flow management, minimal or no savings, a weak grasp of long-term financial consequences, and emotional volatility regarding money."

The Financial Industry Collective Outreach 2023 report reveals that a staggering 88.7% of students could not identify two immediate post-Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia actions, highlighting low financial planning preparedness.

Alarmingly, 71% exhibit poor financial habits, with 73% of Malaysian young adults in debt.

Bankruptcies are on the rise as a result of easily accessible credit through buy-now-pay-later schemes, and a social media-driven comparison culture exacerbates the problem.

"The curated images of success and wealth create a pressure to spend to feel 'enough' and when self-worth is linked to spending, saving becomes emotionally difficult, even if rationally understood," Neoh told *SunBiz*.



Poh says research shows that financial literacy levels among young adults in Malaysia are still alarmingly low.

"Addressing these money beliefs and behaviours is vital, as they profoundly influence financial decisions and shape long-term financial well-being."

Meanwhile, the alarming rising cost of living coupled with stagnant wage growth has undoubtedly narrowed the financial breathing room for retirement savings.

"Debt issues and the need to build financial resilience often take precedence, overshadowing long-term retirement planning," Neoh said.

"The focus shifts to immediate financial recovery, such as clearing debts and rebuilding emergency savings. This short-term financial stress can understandably push retirement planning to the back burner, making it seem like a distant concern," he added.

It is easy, and perhaps understandable even, to see retirement as a distant, irrelevant concept, especially for Malaysian young adults with decades until their golden years.

However, ignoring it today could



Neoh says starting early allows for greater savings accumulation and the benefits of compounded growth.

set the stage for future struggles, said Poh, who is also the CEO of The Perception Machine LLP, a strategic communication consultancy firm.

For young adults, Neoh said, time is their greatest asset – starting early allows for greater savings accumulation and the benefits of compounded growth.

Cultivating the habit of living within one's means, such as spending only 80% of take-home income, is crucial. The misconception that "I can start later" overlooks the reality of evolving financial responsibilities.

Future income may be committed to new commitments such as housing or family, and expenses can easily outpace income growth, Neoh pointed out.

Job security and access to easy credit are different today, making it even harder to "save more later."

Instilling a retirement saving mindset early, Neoh pointed out, can really strengthen retirement saving and planning norms.

"Behaviourally, humans are creatures of habit," he said. "Starting

early builds inertia, making it easier to maintain a savings habit."

Inertia can work for or against you, Neoh pointed out, highlighting the importance of starting now to leverage it positively.

"Begin saving an amount you're comfortable with, focusing on sustainability over rigid rules of thumb, and make it stick," he said.

In a time when daily survival feels more urgent than long-term planning, Malaysian young adults are understandably focused on this now.

"But this doesn't mean retirement planning is out of reach," Neoh said.

"It simply means we should acknowledge that what used to work for previous generations in building up retirement savings or wealth may not be as effective now and in the future."

"Therefore, we need to rethink how we talk about saving and create low-friction, flexible strategies that meet young people where they are. The result is that you can understand, based on your current lifestyle, savings rate, net worth, and future goals, at what age you might run out of money," he added.

"This provides young adults with a good glimpse of their financial future and an idea of how retirement prepared they are. If they don't like what they see, the good news is they still have time to make the requisite changes today. Different choices can significantly alter their trajectory and future outcome."

Benjamin Franklin, one of the signatories of the US Constitution, famously wrote that "in this world nothing is certain but taxes and death."

"Retirement" can be added to this quote because, in modern society, it has become a near-universal life stage for a significant portion of the population because it highlights the unavoidable realities of life, which many young adults tend to pay no heed to, Poh said.

Retirement, as a social institution, is now a widely accepted part of the life course in many nations, he pointed out.

"It's a period that most people anticipate and plan for, marking the end of their primary working life. The key word here is plan, hence the emphasis on starting retirement planning young to ensure retirement preparedness," Poh said. – by **JOHN GILBERT**

Maybank IB lowers Malaysia's 2025 GDP growth forecast to 4.3%

KUALA LUMPUR: Maybank Investment Bank Bhd (Maybank IB) has revised Malaysia's 2025 real gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecasts to 4.3% from 4.9% and to 4.0% from 4.6% for 2026.

This reflects the direct impact of the United States' reciprocal tariff, even after accounting for exemptions, especially on semiconductor-related products, Malaysia's key exports to the US, Maybank IB said in a note yesterday.

In 2024, Malaysia accounted for 23.8% of US total integrated circuit imports and 14.6% of semiconductor device imports.

Maybank IB also said Malaysia's "negotiate" – not "retaliate" stance – has pre-empted tit-for-tat tariff actions, defusing bigger or even more extreme growth downside.

"At the same time, measures to boost domestic consumer income will be supportive of consumer spending,"

it added.

Among the measures taken so far include the civil service pay and pension hikes, minimum wage rise, progressive wage scale-up policy and a larger allocation for lower income groups' cash handout.

Maybank IB said investments will face increased uncertainties, particularly trade-related foreign direct investments. The investment diversion under the China+ strategy, which has benefited Malaysia, will also be impacted.

"However, initiatives and incentives for energy transition, economic complexity, the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone and domestic investments by government-linked investment companies under the Government-Linked Entities Activation and Reform Programme will provide some buffer," it said.

Meanwhile, Maybank IB has main-

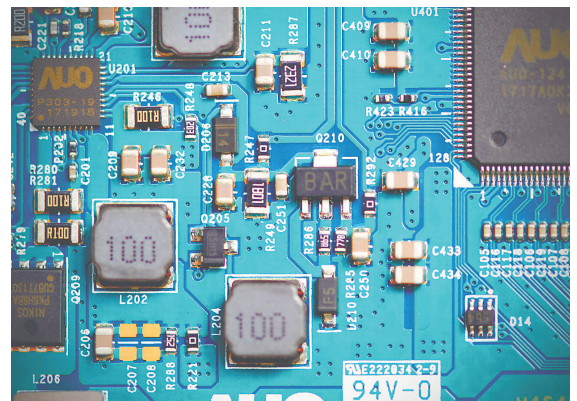
tained its inflation forecast of 2.3% and 2.5% for 2025 and 2026, respectively.

It has tweaked its forecast for Bank Negara Malaysia's Overnight Policy Rate (OPR) from a stable 3% to between 2.75% and 3% range for end-2025 and end-2026.

On a separate note, Maybank IB has maintained its positive outlook for Malaysia's banking sector despite the potential challenges.

Assuming a 1% cut in loan growth, a 25 basis point drop in the OPR, and a 20% rise in credit costs across the board, its sensitivity analysis suggests a manageable 3% to 7% impact on earnings. Dividend yields are expected to remain attractive, ranging from 4% to 6%.

Its preliminary estimates suggest a slower 4.3% GDP growth will lower the industry's loan growth estimate to 4.7% from 5.5%. – Bernama



In 2024, Malaysia accounted for 23.8% of US total integrated circuit imports and 14.6% of semiconductor device imports. – **UNSLASHPIC**

Ailing global petrochem sector to feel more pain

NEW DELHI: Sweeping new US import tariffs threaten to further erode demand for global petrochemical producers and accelerate capacity cuts in an industry plagued by weak margins, industry officials and analysts said.

Tariffs announced by US President Donald Trump on Wednesday are expected to drive up prices for goods such as electronics, appliances and packaging, denting consumption and curbing demand for the petrochemicals used to make plastics and industrial chemicals.

While imports of oil, gas and refined products were exempt from Trump's tariffs, refining margins in Asia for key petrochemical feedstock naphtha plunged 13% to US\$73.07 (RM322.82) per metric ton over Brent crude on Thursday, their lowest since January 17.

"In the short-term, say two to three years, demand is going to be hit in export-based economies and if tariffs are imposed without further changes, the recovery in margins will be pushed out by six months to one year," said Pankaj Srivastava, senior vice president at Rystad Energy, said.

"Those economies will be under pressure to lower utilisation rates at their plants and shut some of the existing loss-making assets," he added.

Naphtha margins reached as high as US\$257 per ton in March 2022 amid fears of supply disruptions on the Black Sea route due to the Russia-Ukraine war.

Since then, margins have collapsed as global petrochemical demand has softened while new capacity has come online, mostly in China. Several consultancies forecast a recovery only by 2027-28, when Chinese capacity additions slow.

Major producers in Asia and Europe have been offloading assets and shutting aging plants, while US operators have switched to cheaper feedstocks such as ethane over naphtha to weather the downturn.

Industry insiders now expect further industry pain in the aftermath of Trump's tariffs, with some producers in Asian economies including export powerhouses Taiwan, South Korea and Japan likely facing added pressure to shut.

Import levies could also force a costly reshuffling of trade flows and supply chains already upended by sanctions on Russian oil exports and Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. — Reuters

Japan PM says Trump tariffs a 'national crisis'

► Ishiba calls for 'calm-headed' approach to negotiations with US administration

TOKYO: US President Donald Trump's tariffs on Japanese goods are a "national crisis", Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said yesterday ahead of cross-party talks on mitigating the impact.

Japanese firms are the biggest investors into the United States but Trump on Wednesday announced a hefty 24% levy on imports from the close US ally as part of global "reciprocal" levies.

The measures "can be called a national crisis and the government is doing its best with all parties" to lessen the impact, Ishiba said in parliament.

He called however for a "calm-headed"

approach to negotiations with Trump's administration, which has also imposed 25% tariffs on auto imports which came into force this week.

Bank of Japan governor Kazuo Ueda said meanwhile that tariffs "can be a factor in downward pressure on the global and national economies".

Ishiba on Thursday told his ministers "to study closely" the tariffs and "to take all measures necessary including financing support" for domestic industries and protecting jobs, government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters.

Ishiba's meetings with party leaders later yesterday were aimed at laying the groundwork for the supplementary budget bill, as his minority government needs opposition support to pass it in parliament, the *Asahi Shimbun* daily reported.

Yesterday, Hayashi repeated that Trump's sweeping new tariffs are "extremely regrettable" and that Japan has "serious concerns" about whether they comply with World Trade Organization rules and US-

Japan trade agreements.

Japan's main Nikkei 225 index fell more than 3% yesterday, adding to a 2.7% drop on Thursday after the S&P 500 on Wall Street dropped by the most in a day since 2020.

Major Japanese business lobby the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) said Trump's tariffs "would have an extremely grave impact on the Japanese economy".

"We strongly urge the government to continue its persistent negotiations for the exemption from tariff measures and to take all possible measures to minimise the impact on small and medium-sized enterprises and small businesses ... by developing a detailed consultation system and strengthening cash management support," the JCCI said on Thursday.

The Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association (Jama) also called for government assistance for its members, which make up an important pillar of the world's fourth-biggest economy.

The industry has "consistently called for fundamental reform to simplify and ease the burden of automobile-related taxation, (and) we kindly request comprehensive support measures to ensure that Japan's automotive industry can maintain its foundation as a manufacturing base, through the revitalisation of the domestic market," it said.

Jama said its members have invested a cumulative total of more than US\$66 billion (RM291.5 billion) in US manufacturing as of 2024, generating over 110,000 direct US jobs and supporting more than 2.2 million others.

"We have long believed that becoming an integral part of the US auto industry - through local investment and job creation - is the most sustainable path forward for the auto industries of both countries," it said.

Japanese carmakers ship about 1.45 million cars to the US from Canada and Mexico, where they operate factories, *Bloomberg News* reported.

By comparison, Japan exports 1.49 million cars directly to the US, while Japanese automakers make 3.3 million cars in America.

In Japan, the auto sector is a key industry, employing about 5.6 million people directly or indirectly. Vehicles accounted for around 28% of Japan's ¥21.3 trillion (RM646 billion) of US-bound exports last year. — AFP



Pedestrians walk past an electronic board showing the numbers of the Nikkei Stock Average on the Tokyo Stock Exchange along a street in Tokyo. — AFP/PPIC

ADB warns of significant US, world growth slowdown

MANILA: The United States' sweeping new tariff regime risks slowing both US and global growth, shrinking export markets and potentially prompting a Federal Reserve response, the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) chief economist said.

Chief economist Albert Park said that unlike previous US-China trade tensions which saw manufacturing shift to Southeast Asia, this round of tariffs was broad enough to slow trade across the region.

The fallout could dampen US growth and prompt the Federal Reserve to lower policy rates, he said.

"The magnitude and breadth of the new US tariffs may slow growth in the US and globally so significantly that it will shrink total East Asian export opportunities rather than simply shifting production within it," Park said. The US tariffs impose substantial levies on trading partners, including Southeast Asian nations, with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia facing some of the highest rates.

China, already facing economic headwinds, will have a 34% tariff, on top of the 20% Trump imposed earlier this year, bringing total levies to 54%.

The escalation in tariffs will have "negative repercussions for China's growth outlook," Park said.

China has relied on exports for its post-pandemic recovery and is "likely to double down on their recent policy shift to prioritise domestic consumption while increasing trade with partners other than the US", Park said. China has kept its economic target for this year at "around 5%". It has urged the United States to cancel the new tariffs and vowed countermeasures to safeguard its own interests. Southeast Asian economies face their own hefty tariff barriers, limiting their ability to absorb diverted trade, reducing growth opportunities, Park said.

Park also warned that capital outflows from Southeast Asia were a "distinct possibility" as foreign investors typically retreat from riskier markets, and the tariffs have added a new layer of geopolitical and economic uncertainty.

In another development, Taiwan's government announced yesterday at least NT\$288 billion (RM38.44 billion) in financial help for companies and industries to deal with the impact of US tariffs, including export credits.

Taiwan had sought to avoid Trump's threatened levies by pledging increased investment in the United States and more purchases of US energy, but was still hit by a hefty 32% tax on its imports, excluding

semiconductor chips.

The government has described the tariffs as "highly unreasonable" and "unfair", and is seeking negotiations with Washington.

Taiwan's trade surplus with the United States is the seventh highest of any country, reaching US\$73.9 billion in 2024.

Around 60% of Taiwan's exports to the US are information and communications technology products, or ICT, which includes chips.

Speaking at a news conference in Taipei, Premier Cho Jung-tai reiterated that the government regarded the tariffs as unreasonable, saying it would provide NT\$88 billion to help companies affected.

Finance Minister Chuang Tsui-yun, speaking next to Cho, said the government would also provide NT\$200 billion in trade financing for exporters.

The announcements were made before financial markets reopen in Taiwan on Monday, having been closed on Thursday and yesterday for a holiday.

Taiwanese government officials have repeatedly said trade with the US has been skewed by strong demand for Taiwanese technology products, such as advanced semiconductors - a sector dominated by the island, home to major chipmaker TSMC. — AFP, Reuters

BRIEFS

THAILAND TO IMPORT MORE US AUTOS, LNG, ELECTRONICS

BANGKOK: Thailand plans to import more US autos, liquefied natural gas and electronics to try reduce the trade gap with the United States, the finance minister said yesterday. The Southeast Asian country wants to narrow the gap as much as possible by importing more US goods, Finance Minister Pichai Chunhavanjira told reporters. Thailand has earlier said it plans to import US agricultural goods. The commerce ministry has said Thailand had a trade surplus with the US of US\$35.4 billion (RM156.3 billion) last year, while Washington has put its deficit with Thailand at US\$45.6 billion. — Reuters

BP CHAIRMAN SET TO STEP DOWN NEXT YEAR

LONDON: BP said yesterday chairman Helge Lund will step down after a major reset at the British energy giant that saw it recently shelve carbon-reduction targets to focus on fossil fuel output. "Having fundamentally reset our strategy, BP's focus now is on delivering the strategy at pace, improving performance and growing shareholder value," Lund, who is "most likely" to step down next year, said in a statement. The Norwegian, who assumed the role at the start of 2019, added that up until his departure he remains "committed to supporting" chief executive Murray Auchincloss as the latter delivers the group's "strategic and financial objectives". — AFP

Laid-off US health officials may get to stay on for 2 months

WASHINGTON: Thousands of employees fired this week from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the public health agencies it oversees may be asked to temporarily continue working for two months, the department said on Thursday.

The department began mass layoffs Tuesday at top health agencies like the FDA, CDC, and NIH, aiming to cut 10,000 jobs under a plan by Trump and Elon Musk to shrink the federal government and cut costs.

Employees said they received "reduction in force" notices placing them on administrative leave from April 1 to June 2. Some at the Food and Drug Administration were told to keep their work computers.

Health agency sources said the layoffs had already begun to affect everything from bird flu response to drug oversight.

"All employees affected by the reduction in force may be asked to temporarily work until their government service ends on June 2," said HHS spokesman Andrew Nixon.

"This decision aims to make the transition smooth and limit any disruption to the agency's work. HHS supports this plan to keep public health services running while managing the reorganisation."

Officials at the FDA are being asked to identify specific employees who can keep working during this time, the *Washington Post* reported citing an email it obtained.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr announced last week a plan to reshape health agencies, including firing 3,500 people at the FDA, 2,400 at the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 1,200 at the NIH, and 300 at the Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The cuts, along with 10,000 recent voluntary exits, will shrink HHS's full-time staff from 82,000 to 62,000, Kennedy said. — Reuters

Tariffs could make iPhones cost US\$2,300

➤ Import taxes may raise prices by 43%, Samsung could benefit from South Korea's lower rates

BENGALURU: Your favourite iPhone could soon become much pricier, thanks to tariffs.

US President Donald Trump imposed a series of sweeping tariffs on countries around the world that could drastically alter the landscape of global trade, and consumer goods like iPhones could be among the hardest hit, analysts said on Thursday, with increases of 30% to 40% if the company were to pass on the cost to consumers.

Most iPhones are still made in China, which was hit with a 54% tariff. If those levies persist, Apple has a tough choice: absorb the extra expense or pass it on to customers.

Shares of the company closed down 9.3% on Thursday, hitting their worst day since March 2020.

Apple sells more than 220 million iPhones a year; its biggest markets include the US, China and Europe.

The cheapest iPhone 16 model was launched in the US with a sticker price of US\$799 (RM3,554), but could cost as much as US\$1,142, per calculations based on projections from analysts at Rosenblatt Securities, who say the cost could rise by 43% — if Apple is able to pass that on to consumers.

A more expensive iPhone 16 Pro Max, with a 6.9-inch display and 1 terabyte of storage, which currently retails at US\$1,599, could cost nearly US\$2,300 if a 43% increase were to pass to consumers.

Trump imposed tariffs on a wide range of Chinese imports in his first term as president to pressure US companies to bring manufacturing either back to the US or to nearby countries such as Mexico, but Apple secured exemptions or waivers for several products. This time, he has not yet granted any exemptions.

"This whole China tariff thing is playing out right now completely contrary to our expectation that American icon Apple would be kid-gloved, like last time," Barton Crockett, analyst at Rosenblatt Securities, said in a note.

The iPhone 16e, launched in February as a cheaper entry point for Apple's suite of artificial-intelligence features, costs US\$599. A 43% price hike could push that cost to US\$856. Prices of other Apple devices could jump as well.

Apple did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Many customers pay for their phones over a period of two or three years through contracts with their cellular providers.

However, other analysts noted that iPhone sales have been floundering in the company's major markets, as Apple Intelligence, a suite of features that helps summarise notifications, rewrite emails and give users access to ChatGPT, has failed to enthrall buyers.

Expert reviews have suggested that the features, while innovative, do not provide

enough of a compelling reason to justify upgrading to newer models.

The stagnation in demand could put additional pressure on Apple's bottom line, especially if costs rise due to tariffs.

Angelo Zino, equity analyst at CFRA Research, said the company will have a tough time passing on more than 5% to 10% of the cost to consumers.

"We expect Apple to hold off on any major increases on phones until this fall when its iPhone 17 is set to launch, as it is typically how it handles planned price hikes."

Even with some production moving to Vietnam and India, most iPhones are still made in China, and those countries were not spared from tariffs either, with Vietnam getting a 46% levy and India's coming in at 26%.

Apple would need to raise its prices by at least 30% on average to offset import duties, according to Counterpoint Research co-founder Neil Shah.

A potentially sharp price hike could dampen demand for the smartphone and give South Korea's Samsung Electronics an edge, as the Asian country faces lower tariffs than China, where all iPhones sold in the US are made.

"Our quick math on Trump's tariff Liberation Day suggests this could blow up Apple, potentially costing the company up to US\$40 billion," Rosenblatt Securities' Crockett noted, adding that negotiations between Apple, China and the White House are likely.

"It's hard for us to imagine Trump blowing up an American icon...but this looks pretty tough." — Reuters

Tesla investors expect sales to drop again as Musk faces backlash

SAN FRANCISCO: CEO Elon Musk pledged Tesla would return to growth this year after the company posted its first-ever sales decline in 2024. But the odds look stacked against him.

Relentless protests in many countries against the billionaire's involvement in US President Donald Trump's administration and far-right politics in Europe have tarnished the image of the once-leading electric vehicle brand. That was a key factor behind Tesla posting a 13% drop in quarterly deliveries on Wednesday, the weakest in nearly three years.

Now, investors and analysts are bracing for a fall in Tesla sales again this year.

"This is our first look at the impact of recent brand damage — and it appears to be the primary driver behind this quarter's delivery decline," Gene Munster, managing partner at Deepwater Asset Management, said on X. "These growth rates will likely deteriorate further this quarter."

Munster estimates 2025 deliveries will be 9% below the 1.79 million Tesla reported last year.

It is not all down to politics. Fans have long bemoaned the automaker's aging lineup even as rivals including BYD in China — where competition is especially tough — have introduced EVs that compete with the popular Tesla Model Y SUV. In Europe too, Tesla is losing ground.

The company did refresh the Model Y, with deliveries starting in China in late February, and investors are watching whether that makes a difference to sales in the coming quarters.

Still, Deutsche Bank analysts expect a 5% sales drop this year, assuming a staggered rollout of Tesla's anticipated cheaper car. Tesla is expected to prioritise delivery volumes at the cost of margins again this year with more incentives and lucrative financial deals, they said.

Tesla has not announced when a cheaper



Protests in many countries over the Musk's links to Trump and far-right politics in Europe have hurt the reputation of the once-leading electric car brand. — PEXELS PIX

model will be launched and at what price.

Gary Black, managing partner of Tesla shareholder The Future Fund, expects the company's 2025 delivery and profit "will go much lower" if the cheaper vehicle is simply a barebones version of an existing model instead of a new product that appeals to more customers.

Barclays analysts said the first-quarter delivery number "sets a challenging path for even flat year on year volume in 2025."

Last year, Musk had promised 20% to 30%

volume growth in 2025. He did not reiterate this in January, saying instead, Tesla was "working hard" to grow its annual volumes.

On Wednesday, Tesla said retooling production lines for the refreshed Model Y across all four of its factories led to the loss of several weeks of production during the first quarter.

The company did not respond to requests for further comment.

On Thursday, Tesla stock closed down 5.5%, after major swings on Wednesday following

Trump's announcement of steeper-than-expected tariffs and the delivery numbers.

Musk has said tariffs will mean more costs for the EV maker, which imports substantial quantities of materials used to make batteries.

Morningstar analysts said tariffs on such parts could add at least 5% to 10% to Tesla's vehicle cost.

But it is Musk's embrace of far-right politics in Europe and work as an adviser to Trump at the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) overseeing steep cuts to the US federal workforce and funds for humanitarian projects that could end up being more costly for Tesla.

Tesla cars, showrooms and charging stations have been vandalised, prompting the Trump administration to launch investigations and threaten strict action.

On Saturday, at a protest in front of a showroom east of San Francisco, hundreds of people took to the streets with placards and megaphones, calling on consumers to boycott Tesla vehicles and stock. Passing motorists honked and cheered in support.

"He could have found efficiency. Instead, he just fired people," said Rachelle Mazar, a 66-year-old retired nurse attending the protest. "He's a very dangerous force in our country right now," she said, holding up a poster that read "Dump Tesla".

Politico reported on Wednesday that Musk was planning to step down from his DOGE role earlier than expected, but the White House said he would depart when his work was complete.

Wedbush analyst Dan Ives, a noted Tesla bull, said Musk's involvement at DOGE "is not sustainable and the longer Musk stays at DOGE this adds more risk to the Tesla story and could face permanent brand damage." — Reuters

TOP SHOTS OF THE WEEK



HEAVY-DUTY WINNER ... The Ford Ranger Platinum was awarded Best Pick-up Truck at the MARii Awards, with Inokom MD Syed Ahmad Muzri (centre) accepting the honour.



MORE FLIGHTS FOR HARI RAYA ... Malaysia Airlines held a send-off at KLIA for one of 48 red-eye flights added for the Hari Raya Aidilfitri festive season. The event was graced by Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook (centre) and Malaysia Aviation Group managing director Datuk Captain Izham Ismail (right), who joined passengers in marking the occasion.



STRONG DEMAND FOR IPO ... SumiSaujana Group Bhd led by CEO Norazlam Norbi (fourth from left) celebrates a major milestone as its IPO balloting wraps up with 1.85 times oversubscription, paving the way for its ACE Market debut on Bursa Malaysia.



GOING PUBLIC ... HI Mobility Bhd has officially been listed on the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia, with CEO Lim Chern Chuen (fourth from left) and board members marking the key moment.



BOOSTING ESPORTS TALENT ...

Aeon Bank (M) Bhd and the Malaysia Esports Federation (MESF) have joined forces to elevate Malaysia's esports landscape through a MoU. Present at the ceremony are Aeon deputy CEO Tsutomu Kamagata (seated second from left) and MESF president Naim Al-Amin (seated far right).

GROUND ZERO ... A huge crater partially filled with water marks the point of the gas leak that caused the massive Putra Heights blaze.
— ADAM AMIR HAMZAH / THESUN



TOTALLY RAZED ... A residential area next to Putra Heights resembling a war zone after the flames were extinguished.
— ADAM AMIR HAMZAH / THESUN

SCORCHED HOME ... A resident examining damage to his house in the aftermath of the Putra Heights calamity.
— ADAM AMIR HAMZAH / THESUN



NINE LIVES ... A Putra Heights resident is relieved to be reunited with her cat after the scramble to escape the gas leak flames.
— ADAM AMIR HAMZAH / THESUN

PRIMATE PALS ... A visitor to Bukit Malawati in Kuala Selangor feeding silvered leaf monkeys, locally known as lotong. Unlike other untamed primates, lotong are calm and friendly. With over 100 of them in the area, they have become a popular attraction among tourists.
— ADB RAWI YAHYA / THESUN



GOLIATH INFERNO ... A colossal pillar of flames blocks out the view of the sky after a gas pipeline breach ignited in Putra Heights on Tuesday morning, triggering a series of thunderous explosions that sent tremors through the surrounding area, rattling glass door panels of houses located almost 3km away.
— ADAM AMIR HAMZAH / THESUN



STREET FAIRS ... Residents set off fireworks during the Parrandas de Camajuani festival celebrations in Cuba.
— AFP/IC

DEFT LEGWORK ... Everton's Irish defender Jake O'Brien (left) holds off Liverpool's Colombian midfielder Luis Diaz during the English Premier League football match on Wednesday at Anfield in Liverpool, England.
— AFP/IC



FLOATING MARVELS ... An aerial image shows hot air balloons, mostly made from recycled paper, drifting in the air during an event to celebrate Eid al-Fitr in Wonosobo, Central Java on Wednesday.
— AFP/IC

SEARCH AND RESCUE ... Members of the Chinese Red Cross International Emergency Response Team working at a collapsed building following an earthquake in Mandalay, Myanmar on Monday.
— REUTERS/IC



HAPPY RIDE ... Residents enjoying theme park attractions at a carnival during Eid al-Fitr in Karachi on Tuesday.
— AFP/IC

Taking a bold leap into the unknown

A NEW beginning can hold so much of promise, yet it can also be daunting. I bring up the idea of new beginnings since today marks the beginning of *theSun* newspaper being published on weekends. It also marks the beginning of my column.

There is nothing like holding something new in your hand, that initial physical sensation – a newspaper, a pen, a phone, a book, a handbag, a new car... you get what I mean. It has a certain smell and texture, and all your senses are engaged.

What about a new experience – like starting a new job, forming a new friendship, entering a new relationship, visiting a new country, flying on an airplane for the first time or experiencing snow? There is a myriad of new moments to discover.

Then comes the mind: How do you feel emotionally? Pride, joy, accomplishment, happiness?

Some people feel anxiety when it comes to new beginnings, even though they are often seen as positive experiences. They fear new beginnings because it brings uncertainty and change, which can be uncomfortable or even overwhelming.

Someone I know once obtained the job of her dreams. In her previous job, she was underpaid, bullied and disrespected by her boss and peers. However, in her new job, her colleagues were delighted to have her on board and often expressed how happy they were that she joined them.

In the first two months of her new job, she delivered the results and performed well. However, in her third month, she began to slacken, often showing up late

for work and feeling low.

Her new boss noticed, had a warm chat with her and suggested she see a therapist. It turned out that the woman had never had anyone show her kindness or given her praise for most of her life.

So, although she got everything she had hoped for and more in her new job, her subconscious mind struggled to accept the praise, and she began to self-sabotage by procrastinating, arriving late to work or meetings, and becoming withdrawn and uncommunicative during discussions.

Therapy uncovered her deep-rooted sense of unworthiness and the belief that she did not deserve to be happy or successful. She also felt uncomfortable receiving praise. (All this stemmed from a childhood where she was often told that she was not good enough or that she was a bad girl).

After several months of therapy, she began to feel more confident, developed a newfound sense of self-worth and gave herself permission to shine.

New beginnings can feel both exciting and terrifying. The mix of uncertainty, hope and hesitation is completely natural. People often feel safe in what they know, even if it is not ideal.

A new beginning means stepping into unfamiliar territory, where outcomes are uncertain, which can trigger anxiety and hesitation.

There is also the fear of failure – starting over often means trying something new, and there is always a chance it will not work out.

Some people worry about disappointing themselves or letting others down, which can hold them back



"New beginnings can be scary but they also bring renewal, possibilities and the chance to build something even better than before."

from pursuing opportunities that could bring growth and fulfilment.

Letting go of a familiar routine, place or person can also be emotionally difficult. Even if the past was not great, it was known and comfortable while the future feels unpredictable. This attachment can make moving forward seem overwhelming.

Lack of confidence is another factor that can make new beginnings scary. People may doubt their ability to succeed in a new situation, and self-doubt can create hesitation, making it hard to believe in one's potential for growth.

Change can also feel overwhelming, leading to feelings of paralysis. The fear of making the "wrong" choice can result in stagnation.

Additionally, negative past experiences may influence the way someone perceives change. If they have struggled with transitions before, they may associate new beginnings with stress, pain or failure, making them reluctant to embrace new opportunities.

While fear is a natural response to change, there are ways to make the transition feel smoother and more manageable.

One of the most powerful shifts is reframing fear as excitement. Instead of thinking, "What if it goes wrong?" try asking, "What if it goes right?" This shift in perspective can help reduce anxiety and increase motivation.

Taking small and manageable steps towards a goal can also make the process feel less overwhelming. Every step forward builds momentum and confidence, reinforcing the belief that change is not only possible but beneficial.

Focusing on what you can control is

another helpful strategy. Instead of worrying about the unknown, concentrate on the aspects of change that are within your power.

Planning, preparing and setting realistic expectations can make new beginnings feel less intimidating. Seeking support from friends, family, a mentor or a therapist can also ease anxiety. Supportive conversations can provide clarity, encouragement and reassurance that you are not alone in your journey.

Embracing a growth mindset is key to navigating new beginnings. Every challenge presents a stepping stone towards personal development. Believing that things will unfold as they should can bring a sense of peace and confidence.

New beginnings can be scary but they also bring renewal, possibilities and the chance to build something even better than before.

Ultimately, new beginnings are a gateway to personal transformation. While they may stir up feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, they also offer precious opportunities for growth and self-discovery.

By reframing our fears as excitement, taking small steps forward and maintaining a growth mindset, we can navigate these transitions more effectively. When we embrace change with courage and openness, we unlock our potential for extraordinary growth and fulfilment.

Nahalana T. Kreshnan is a somatic psychotherapist who utilises the modality of Somatic Experiencing® in her sessions.

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Parenting in digital era: Building trust with teenagers

COMMENT
by Faeza Hasnan

THE Netflix show *Adolescence* has recently sparked discussions about the impact of technology and social media on children's well-being as well as the growing challenges parents face in monitoring their children's digital lives.

Today, it is common to see young children owning smartphones, spending hours online – whether on social media, playing online games or chatting with friends.

Research shows that adolescents interact with digital technology more than any previous generation.

Technological advancements offer various opportunities, such as access to educational resources, entertainment and enhanced communication. However, it also brings challenges.

Adolescents can become deeply immersed in the digital world, leading to isolation, reduced face-to-face communication, poor social and interpersonal skills and family conflicts.

Even more concerning are online dangers such as cyberbullying, identity theft and online scams. These dangers often fuel parents' anxiety as they struggle to balance granting freedom with ensuring safety in their children's digital lives.

Generational gap

A major challenge in managing children's digital engagement stems

from the generational gap between parents and their tech-savvy children.

Most parents today grew up socialising face-to-face while today's teenagers build friendships, identities and self-worth online. What parents see as excessive screen time are viewed by teenagers as essential to their social lives. Hence, this makes it difficult for parents to understand their children's deep emotional connection to the digital world.

Psychologist Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development explains this well. Adolescence is a fundamental phase in which individuals develop their identity and self-concept.

During this stage, adolescents explore their independence and begin negotiating their rights, including privacy, participation and self-expression. Naturally, this causes conflict as parents impose boundaries while teenagers push for autonomy, often clashing over digital usage.

Therefore, without effective engagement strategies, this gap can lead to further disengagement and strained family relationships.

Effective strategies

Traditional parenting such as strict monitoring or outright banning of devices can often backfire, pushing teenagers to become more secretive about their online activities.

Parents can take proactive steps to develop a healthier and more balanced approach to digital engagement rather than engage in power struggles. One of the strategies



Traditional parenting such as strict monitoring or outright banning of devices can often backfire, pushing teenagers to become more secretive about their online activities. – **BERNAMAPIC**

starts with shifting the mindset from a policing approach to a partnership approach.

By adopting a partnership approach, parents can establish open and non-judgemental communications, allowing for honest conversations with their teenagers about their concerns and worries. This may be unfamiliar in some households, especially in many Asian families, where emotional vulnerability and connection may not always be common practices.

However, it is important to recognise the value of establishing this type of engagement with children. Instead of focusing on rules

and regulations, parents can talk about values, risks and boundaries in the digital world.

When children understand their parents' concerns and the potential risks that the digital world may bring to them, they are more likely to agree to a digital family agreement.

Together, parents and children can create a set of guidelines that balance independence with safety. This collaborative approach will foster mutual respect and accountability.

By involving children in setting these boundaries, parents can increase the likelihood that the rules will be respected and followed. Additionally, parents should model

healthy digital habits themselves to reinforce these agreements.

Finally, having something in common is a crucial element in creating strong bonds within families. One way to strengthen bonds is by learning about technology together.

Instead of seeing the digital world only as a threat, parents can explore its positive side such as learning new apps, sharing funny videos or even having conversations about digital trends and challenges with their children. This will not only build a common ground but also help parents better understand their children's online world.

Ultimately, the most effective parental tool is not surveillance but trust. Open and emotional communications can create an environment where adolescents can willingly seek parental guidance rather than hide their online activities.

By shifting from control to collaboration, parents can better protect their children from digital risks while empowering them to navigate the digital world responsibly and independently. This will not only safeguard their children's well-being but also nurture stronger and more trusting family relationships.

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Ketupat goes to Oxford

World-famous dictionary recognises M'sian dishes - P20

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Four Beatles movies set for 2028

OXFORD Languages has added new words from Malaysia and Singapore to its latest Oxford English Dictionary (OED) update, including nine food terms that have become widely recognised beyond their regions of origin.

Ketupat is a small rice cake boiled in a pouch of woven palm leaves, originating in Indonesia but also popular in Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore. *Ketupat* made with rice is wrapped in a diamond shape with woven coconut palm leaves, while a version made with glutinous rice is wrapped in a triangle shape with woven fan palm leaves. It is usually eaten with *satay* or other dishes and is traditionally served at festive occasions.

Otak-otak is a Southeast Asian dish consisting of ground fish or other seafood mixed with spices and coconut milk, wrapped in banana or palm leaves and cooked by steaming or grilling over an open charcoal fire. It is usually served as an accompaniment to *nasi lemak*, a Malay dish of rice cooked in coconut milk and flavoured with pandan leaf, served with various garnishes such as cucumber slices, fried fish, roasted peanuts, cooked egg and *sambal*.

Nasi lemak is a common breakfast dish, just like *kaya* toast, a sandwich consisting of toasted bread spread with butter and *kaya*, a jam made from coconut milk, eggs and sugar, often flavoured with pandan leaf. *Kaya* toast is also a popular afternoon snack, typically served in Malaysian and Singaporean *kopitiams*, accompanied by a half-boiled egg, an egg cooked briefly in freshly boiled water so that the yolk and white remain runny, then served in a bowl with dark soy sauce and white pepper.

Two examples of dishes that received Anglicised names are fish head curry and steamboat. Fish head curry, influenced by Chinese and South Indian cuisine, consists of a large fish head, usually of a sea bream or snapper, cooked in a tangy tamarind-based curry gravy with vegetables such as aubergine and okra. Steamboat refers to a dish where thinly sliced meat, vegetables and other ingredients are dipped in boiling stock at the table. The word originally described a metal pot, often with a central flue, placed over a heat source at the table for cooking and serving the dish.

For those craving a takeaway, Malaysian and Singaporean English use the term *tapau*, which comes from the Malay word and its Cantonese etymon *da baau*, meaning "to pack up food to take away".

In addition to food-related words, the update includes interjections and cultural terms. *Alamak*, borrowed from Malay, is a colloquial exclamation used to convey surprise, shock, dismay or outrage. Its origin is uncertain, possibly derived from the Arabic *a'la* (meaning "higher, highest") or Allah ("God"), combined with *mak* ("mother"). A similar interjection *alamah* is used in Kristang, a Malay-Portuguese creole language.

This release also sees additions from Malaysian English. In Malaysia, *mat rempit* (2004) refers to young men who participate in illegal motorcycle street racing and perform dangerous stunts. The word "terror" has different meanings in the region: in Philippine and Malaysian English, it can mean "terrible" or "awful", but it is also used positively to describe something excellent or admirable. Often, it is preceded by *wah* and followed by *lah*, as in the approving phrase, "Wah! So terror lah."

The latest update to the OED includes nearly 600 new words, phrases and senses.



Fish head curry is a spicy dish, slow-cooked with aromatic gravy. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @THE MEATMAN CHANNEL

Nasi lemak, ketupat, tapau enter Oxford dictionary

► Latest update recognises Malaysian, Singaporean dishes, expressions



Nasi lemak is Malaysia's iconic dish.



Tapau, referring to takeaways, is another colloquialism that has been recognised by OED. – PIC FROM FACEBOOK @MACHA, JOMTAPAU



Otak-otak is a fish-based savoury dish that is popular among Malaysians. – PIC FROM FACEBOOK @OTAKOTAKMASAI



Steamboat is now officially an English word. – PIC FROM FACEBOOK @CHETAASTEAMBOAT



Ketupat is best enjoyed with savoury dishes such as rendang or satay. – PICS FROM PEXELS

English words from Malaysia and Singapore added in this update:

Food-related

fish head curry, n.
half-boiled egg, n.
kaya, n.
kaya toast, n.
ketupat, n.
nasi lemak, n.
otak-otak, n.
steamboat, n.
tapau, v.

Others

alamak, int.
mat rempit, n.
terror, adj.

Scallop sensations

► Five delicious ways to cook this unique seafood

■ BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

SCALLOPS are a true delicacy. It is tender and sweet. They absorb flavours beautifully and cook in just minutes. This feature explores five easy ways to prepare it.

Garlic butter scallops

Simple yet sophisticated, garlic butter scallops are a go-to for an effortless gourmet meal. The buttery, garlicky richness enhances the natural sweetness of the scallops, making this dish a favourite.

Ingredients

10 large scallops
2 tablespoons of butter
3 cloves of garlic, minced
1 tablespoon of olive oil
1 tablespoon of lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)

Instructions

1. Pat the scallops dry and season with salt and pepper.
2. Heat olive oil in a pan over medium-high heat.
3. Sear the scallops for about two minutes per side until golden brown.
4. Reduce heat to low, add butter and garlic and cook for 30 seconds.
5. Drizzle with lemon juice and garnish with parsley before serving.



Sambal scallops is a Malaysian favourite, packed with bold chilli, shrimp paste and tangy lime.

– PIC FROM YOUTUBE @SAIDA SINAGA

Spicy sambal scallops

Sambal lovers, this one is for you. Infused with the bold flavours of chilli, shrimp paste and lemongrass, this spicy dish would pair excellently with steamed rice.

Ingredients

10 scallops
2 tablespoons of oil
1 tablespoon of *sambal* paste
1 small onion, chopped
1 clove of garlic, minced
1 teaspoon of shrimp paste (*belacan*), toasted
1 tablespoon of lime juice
1 teaspoon of sugar
Salt to taste



Garlic butter scallops is a rich dish with golden-seared scallops in a buttery, garlicky sauce. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @ISLAND VIBE COOKING

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a pan and saute onions and garlic until fragrant.
2. Add *sambal* paste and shrimp paste, cook for two minutes.
3. Toss in scallops and stir-fry for three to four minutes until cooked through.
4. Add lime juice, sugar and salt, then mix well.
5. Serve hot with steamed rice.



Scallop curry is a coconut-based gravy with aromatic spices for a comforting meal.

– PIC FROM YOUTUBE @COOKING WITH KIRON

Scallop curry

This rich coconut-based curry balances heat and creaminess, making it a comforting dish that pairs wonderfully with rice or flatbreads.

Ingredients

10 scallops
2 tablespoons of oil
1 onion, sliced
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1-inch ginger, grated
1 tablespoon of curry powder
1 cup of coconut milk
1 tomato, chopped
1 tablespoon of lime juice
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh coriander for garnish

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a pan and saute onions, garlic and ginger until fragrant.
2. Add curry powder and cook for one minute.
3. Stir in tomatoes and coconut milk, simmer for five minutes.
4. Add scallops and cook for another three minutes.
5. Season with salt, pepper and lime juice. Garnish with coriander before serving.



Light yet creamy pasta with lemon and tender scallops. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @ROCCOS KITCHEN

Creamy lemon scallop pasta

Scallops meet a luscious lemon cream sauce in this easy, restaurant-quality pasta dish that is refreshing and rich.

Ingredients

200g of pasta (spaghetti or linguine)
10 scallops
2 tablespoons of oil
2 tablespoons of butter
2 cloves of garlic, minced
½ cup of heavy cream
1 tablespoon of lemon zest
1 tablespoon of lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh parsley for garnish

Instructions

1. Cook pasta according to package instructions. Drain and set aside.
2. In a pan, melt butter and sear scallops for two minutes per side. Remove and set aside.
3. Add garlic to the same pan and saute until fragrant.
4. Pour in heavy cream, lemon zest and lemon juice. Simmer for two minutes.
5. Toss in pasta and mix well. Return scallops to the pan and stir gently.
6. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with parsley and serve.



Savoury-sweet stir-fry with a rich soy glaze and warm ginger notes. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @DOWNSHIFTOLOGY

Ginger soy scallops

This quick and easy dish brings out the *umami* flavours of scallops with a rich soy-based glaze and a hint of ginger warmth.

Ingredients

10 scallops
2 tablespoons of soy sauce
1 tablespoon of oyster sauce
1 teaspoon of sugar
1-inch ginger, julienned
1 clove of garlic, minced
1 tablespoon of oil
1 spring onion, sliced (for garnish)

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a pan and saute ginger and garlic until fragrant.
2. Add scallops and sear for two minutes per side.
3. Mix soy sauce, oyster sauce and sugar in a bowl. Pour into the pan.
4. Stir well and cook for another minute until scallops are glazed.
5. Garnish with spring onions and serve hot.

These easy recipes will help you create a restaurant-worthy meal at home. Just remember, scallops cook quickly, so keep an eye on them to maintain their delicate, juicy texture. Happy cooking!



THE Michelin Guide handed out new stars to 68 restaurants in France earlier this week at a ceremony that celebrated emerging young talents and proposed food as a tonic for the world's worries.

Two restaurants joined the highest and most coveted three-star category in Michelin's 2025 France guide, namely Christopher Coutanceau in western La Rochelle and seafood specialist Le Coquillage in northern Brittany.

"The world is worried, the tensions, crises, war at the gates of Europe," Michelin Guide director Gwendal Poullennec said on stage at the ceremony in the eastern city of Metz.

"And in the middle of all that, men and women continue to cook, welcome people, pass on knowledge and to create beauty," he told a crowd of 600 chefs.

The famous red bible for gastronomes still makes and breaks reputations, despite increasing competition from rival food lists and the rise of social media influencers.

France has the highest number of Michelin-endorsed restaurants of the 50 destinations covered by the guide around world, with 31 three stars, 81 two stars and 542 with one star.

Greater diversity

Among the notable winners on Monday was Philippe Etchebest, who won a second star for his restaurant Maison Nouvelle in Bordeaux.

The 58-year-old, who made a



At Coutanceau's restaurant, the finest fish and seafood are prepared with care and imagination.



The Michelin Guide describes fare served at Coutanceau's restaurant as 'an invigorating ode to the Atlantic Ocean'.

France's best chefs

► Michelin Guide awards new stars to 68 restaurants in country

Coutanceau presents a freshly cooked dish at his restaurant Christopher Coutanceau in La Rochelle, France.



Coutanceau (centre) works with his team at his restaurant.



The Michelin Guide notes that Coutanceau campaigns for sustainable fishing and against waste. – PICS FROM AFP



Seafood specialist Le Coquillage was awarded three Michelin stars, the highest attainable for any restaurant. – PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @LECOQUILLAGE

name for himself as a celebrity food judge on TV shows such as *Top Chef*, said the 2025 guide reflected the strength of the next generation

of French chefs.

"We see it on *Top Chef*, there are a lot of creative young people, who are very open to the world. They

are going faster than we did in our time," he said.

Remi Dechambre, food critic at *Le Parisien* newspaper, said the 2025 selection for France rewarded many up-and-coming chefs such as Adrien Cachot and Valentina Giacobbe with a single star.

"It is the new generation. The guide is constantly evolving and this year is a demonstration," he said.

The Michelin Guide has sought to shed its reputation for elitist and pricey dinners in recent years, with more diverse eating options making it onto its lists of recommended outlets internationally.

After rewarding roadside food stalls in Thailand and Singapore, the guide granted a star to a taco stand in Mexico City last year, causing a local sensation but baffling regular eaters there.

Rebels without mention

Each edition of the Michelin Guide in France produces controversy over who is included, who is not and who has joined the list of anti-Michelin rebels.

Showman chef Marc Veyrat had told the guide's inspectors they were not welcome in his new 450-euro-a-head (RM2,197) restaurant in the Megeve ski resort in the Alps.

Veyrat sued Michelin unsuccessfully after inspectors stripped him of a star in 2019 in a controversy dubbed "cheddar-gate".

He claimed the downgrade was because inspectors mistakenly thought he had adulterated a cheese soufflé with English cheddar instead of using local French varieties.

His newly opened Le Restaurant Marc Veyrat did not appear among Monday's winners.

Vincent Favre-Felix, a chef with a one-star restaurant in Annecy, eastern France, recently announced he wanted to return his award, which he has held since 2021, after he decided to change his concept.

The guide stresses that its anonymous inspectors are free to go wherever they want and stars do not belong to the chefs themselves.

A three-star restaurant – the highest award – denotes kitchens where cooking is "elevated to an art form" and chefs are "at the peak of their profession".

Japan has the second-most number of three-starred destinations, followed by Spain, Italy and the US. – AFP

TV SHOW REVIEW

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

NETFLIX'S latest K-drama addition *When Life Gives You Tangerines* is a breathtaking emotional masterpiece. Directed by Kim Won-seok and written by Lim Sang-chun, this drama is all about nostalgia, love, hardships and heartbreaks. Set against the picturesque backdrop of Jeju Island, the series follows Ae-sun and Gwan-sik from their youth to old age, crafting a deeply moving narrative that lingers long after the final episode.

Stellar cast that delivers

The casting in *When Life Gives You Tangerines* is nothing short of perfection. Park Bo-gum, as the younger Gwan-sik, is an excellent actor. His performance sets the standard for an ideal man. His portrayal of a loving husband and quiet strength made Gwan-sik a memorable character. The depth in his expressions, the way he conveyed emotions through silence, and his heartfelt performance made every scene with him impactful.

IU, playing Ae-sun, once again proves she picks her dramas so well. She did a phenomenal job delivering different emotions – everything felt ultra-realistic. She brought Ae-sun to life with raw vulnerability, making it impossible for viewers not to feel every moment of her journey. The chemistry between IU and Bo-gum was incredibly natural, pulling audiences even deeper into their love story.

As the story progresses, Choi Min-sik and Kim Hye-ja take over as the older Gwan-sik and Ae-sun, and they are effortlessly good. Their performances added weight and depth to the characters, making the transition from youth to old age feel beautiful. The way they carried years of love, loss and longing in their expressions was nothing short of masterful. Even the youngest cast members, who played the childhood versions of Ae-sun and Gwan-sik, delivered top-notch performance, making every stage of the characters' lives believable.

Beautiful portrayal of family bonds

Beyond its love story, *When Life Gives You Tangerines* beautifully portrays the deep, unbreakable bonds between parents and their children. The father-daughter relationship is one of the most touching aspects of the series, showing how a father's love is quiet but steadfast, always present even in silence. The way Ae-sun's father supports her, sometimes without words, becomes a powerful example of pure parental love.

At the same time, the mother-daughter bond is just as profound. Younger Ae-sun depends on her mother in a way that feels so natural and real. It was well portrayed, especially the comfort, guidance or just a reassuring presence – everything was well executed. The warmth and strength of a mother's love shine through, showing that no matter how much life changes, a mother will always be a source of strength. These relationships add a great meaning to the story, making the emotional moments hit even harder.

Adding to the star power, Kim Seon-ho makes a special appearance and while his role is brief, it is nothing short of impressive. He brings his signature charm, leaving a lasting impression despite his limited screen time. His character adds an unexpected but meaningful layer to the story, making his presence one of the drama's most talked-about moments.

Every episode of *When Life Gives You Tangerines* is designed to make the audience cry. But rather than relying on forced melodrama, the series crafts its emotions with authenticity. The storytelling is realistic, making viewers feel every joy, sorrow and longing right alongside the characters. It is rare for a series to sustain such emotional intensity in every single episode, yet this one does it flawlessly.

Despite the heartache, *When Life Gives You*

Breathtakingly poignant tale

➤ *When Life Gives You Tangerines* breaks hearts, comforts soul



This heartwarming drama will make you laugh, cry and everything in between.



Choi (left) and Hye-ja make a good pair with amazing chemistry in the series.



Park (left) and IU's chemistry is natural. – PICS FROM NETFLIX



When Life Gives You Tangerines is a South Korean romance show. – IMDBPIC

Tangerines remains breathtakingly beautiful. The cinematography captures Jeju Island with a nostalgic warmth, making every scene feel like a painting.

The soundtrack complements the story, enhancing every emotional beat. The writing, pacing and direction all come together in a way that makes this more than just another Korean series.

Best K-drama yet?

When Life Gives You Tangerines is hands down one of the best series to have been produced in a long time. It sets a new benchmark for emotional storytelling in K-dramas, proving sometimes, the most deeply personal stories can leave the greatest impact. *When Life Gives You Tangerines* is available to stream on Netflix.

Cast: Park Bo-gum, IU, Choi Min-sik, Kim Hye-ja

Director: Kim Won-seok

E-VALUE

ACTING

PLOT

9

9

9



Seon-ho (right) leaves a major impact in the series as a minor character.

HYPE ZONE

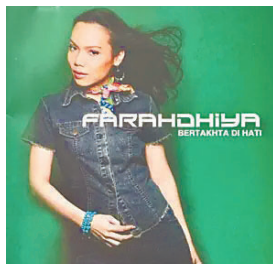
Top karaoke songs in Red Box

As part of Red Box's 25th Anniversary celebrations, it has unveiled the Top 50 Hit Songs for the Malay, Chinese and International categories in 2024, which shows appreciation for music and showcases the diverse musical taste of Malaysians. Additionally, these hit songs will offer premium exposure for the top 50 artistes a chance to be featured on the Bukit Bintang digital billboard, maximising their visibility.



Top English picks:

1. *Perfect* - Ed Sheeran (14.84k plays)
2. *When I Was Your Man* - Bruno Mars (10.97k plays)
3. *My Heart Will Go On* - Celine Dion (10.85k plays)
4. *Love Story* - Taylor Swift (10.49k plays)
5. *Rolling in the Deep* - Adele (9.74k plays)
6. *Let It Go* - Idina Menzel
7. *Flashlight* - Jessie J
8. *Photograph* - Ed Sheeran
9. *One Call Away* - Charlie Puth
10. *Fight Song* - Rachel Platten
11. *Baby Shark* - Pink Fong
12. *Shallow* - Bradley Cooper & Lady Gaga
13. *See You Again* - Wiz Khalifa ft Charlie Puth
14. *Fall For You* - Seconhand Serenade
15. *Faded* - Alan Walker ft Iselin Solheim
16. *Shape of You* - Ed Sheeran
17. *Someone Like You* - Adele
18. *Blank Space* - Taylor Swift
19. *Marvin Gaye* - Charlie Puth ft Meghan Trainor
20. *Secret Love Song* - Little Mix
21. *All I Ask* - Adele
22. *A Thousand Years* - Adele
23. *Love Yourself* - Justin Bieber
24. *Just the Way You Are* - Bruno Mars
25. *I'm Not the Only One* - Sam Smith
26. *How Far I'll Go* - Auli'i Cravalho



Top Malay picks:

1. *Bertakhta di Hati* - Farahdhiya (11k plays)
2. *Baldu Biru* - Awie Ella (9.64k plays)
3. *Romancinta* - Mojo (8.22k plays)
4. *Sudah Ku Tahu* - Projector Band (7.48k plays)
5. *Kesetiaan* - Siti Sarah (7.28k plays)
6. *Sambullah Kasihku* - Lovehunters
7. *Dipenjara Janji* - Awie
8. *Meraung* - New Boyz
9. *Goyang Dumang* - Cita Citata
10. *Putus Terpaksa* - Ziana Zain
11. *Perawan Atau Janda* - Cita Citata
12. *Anggapamu* - Ziana Zain
13. *Kenang Terindah* - Samsons
14. *Ombak Rindu* - Hafiz Adira
15. *Matahariku* - Agnes Monica
16. *Beribu Sesalan* - Jaclyn Victor
17. *Baizura* - Shila Amzah
18. *Aku Yang Tersakiti* - Judika
19. *Surat Cinta Untuk Starla* - Virgoun
20. *Relaku Pujuk* - Spider
21. *Menahan Rindu* - Wany Hasrita
22. *Sandiwaru Cinta* - Repvblik
23. *Kesilapku, Keegoanmu* - Siti Nurhaliza
24. *Di Matamu* - Sufian Suhaimi
25. *Hanya Aku* - Hyper Act
26. *Tiara* - Kris
27. *Kehilangan* - Firman
28. *Rumah Singgah* - Fabio Asher
29. *Lamunan Terhenti* - Aris Ariwatan



Top Chinese picks:

1. *Piao Xiang Bei Fang* - Namewee & Wang Leehom (10.99k plays)
2. *Tong Hua* - Michael Wong (4.87k plays)
3. *Yong Qi* - Fish Leong (3.85k plays)
4. *Liang Shan-Bo and Juliet* - Genie Chuo & Gary Chaw (1.96k plays)
5. *Shan Ding Hei Du She* - Dissy (1.83k plays)
6. *Tian Hou* - Andrew Tan
7. *A La Si Jia Hai Wan* - Firdhaus Farmizi
8. *Jia Bing* - Priscilla Abby
9. *Tai Guo Qing Ge* - Namewee
10. *Wo Yi Wei* - Victor Wong
11. *Wu Yan De Jie Ju* - Li Mao Shan & Anna Lin
12. *Biao Gao Ying* - Namewee
13. *Bei Pan* - Gary Chaw
14. *Shi Zai Bi Xing* - Andrew Tan & Bii
15. *Fen Shou Kuai Le* - Fish Leong
16. *Jian Ao* - Jess Lee
17. *Zhang Sheng Xiang Qi* - Fish Leong
18. *Qing Ge* - Fish Leong
19. *Hao Xiang Ni* - Joyce Chu
20. *Ke Xi Bu Shi Ni* - Fish Leong
21. *Xin You Du Zhong* - Lee Pei Ling
22. *Ni Yao De Ai* - Penny Tai
23. *Fen Kai Yi Hou* - Fuying & Sam
24. *Hui Hu Xi De Tong* - Fish Leong
25. *Ai Zi Ji Geng Shen* - Dior
26. *Ren Sheng Qi Qi Luo Luo Luo Luo Luo* - Firdhaus Farmizi
27. *Ke Xi Bu Shi Ni* - Alvin Chong



STARBUCKS®

TRENDING

The Chill Guy meme

DRESSED in denim trousers and sweaters with a nonchalant demeanour, the Chill Guy has been humouring fellow netizens through the dystopian reality.

Sketched into existence by artist Phillip Banks, the Chill Guy is a new character, which he introduced in late 2023 on X.

However, it was in 2024 when the character went viral as netizens adopted it into memes.

Depressing and self-deprecating content, which was paired with the Chill Guy to somewhat create a juxtaposition, was circulated online.

The character became a new insert in pop culture as videos on TikTok were made to imply a nonchalant response to daily life and its stress.

While the Chill Guy phenomenon may have begun as a joke, some argue it reflects the current generation's

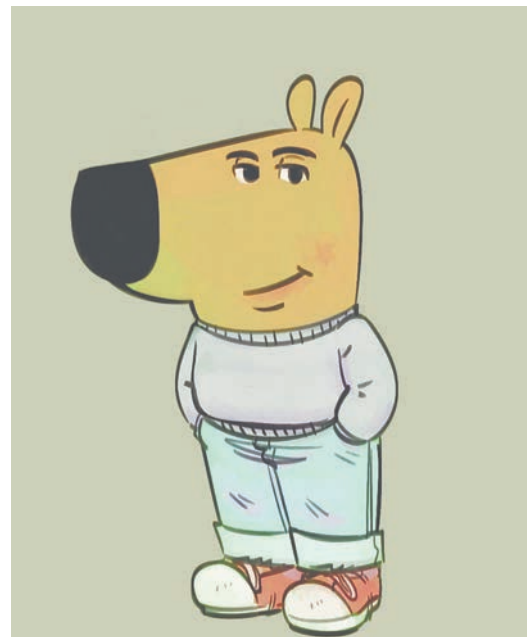
response towards trauma and stress, which have become their coping mechanism.

The "do not care" attitude towards life, in general, is an unsettling trend that plagues the now-generation, stemming from their impending fatigue.

Despite the grim yet humorous reception of the Chill Guy, creator Banks have been making bank since the virality of the character.

From plushies to phone cases, the Chill Guy has naturally made its way to the forefront of pop culture and has cemented its position as an evergreen meme character, joining other beloved characters such as the Grumpy Cat and Trollface.

And, in new development of the Chill Guy, a female counterpart (read: spin-off) the Chill Girl has been slowly creeping into mainstream media and meme creators radar.



The Chill Guy. - PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @PHILBANKSS

Lyfe's chartbusters

- ALL PICS FROM APPLE MUSIC



Song: *Twilight Zone*
Album: *Eternal Sunshine Deluxe*
Artiste: Ariana Grande



Song: *Like Jennie*
Album: *Ruby*
Artiste: Jennie



Song: *Serumpun*
Album: *Serumpun (Single)*
Artiste: Mimifly



Song: *Hot*
Album: *Hot (EP)*
Artiste: Le Sserafim



Song: *Run It Up*
Album: *Run It Up (Single)*
Artiste: Hanumankind



Behind the scene of Wong (left) as Hong Yu.

The Little Nyonya sequel

► Actress Ferlyn Wong explores journey into depths of dual identity in *Emerald Hill*

SINGAPOREAN actress Ferlyn Wong is set to captivate audiences with her compelling portrayal of a character navigating the complexities of dual identity in Mediacorp's blockbuster period drama *Emerald Hill - The Little Nyonya Story*.

Set against the rich backdrop of the 1950s to 1970s Peranakan community in Singapore, the series follows the lives of the Zhang family, showcasing the nuances of Peranakan heritage and the timeless theme of family, love and redemption.

Dual identity role

At the heart of the story is Wong, who portrays two complex characters - Zhou Hong Yu and Zhang An Ya. This dual identity role allows Wong to delve into the intricacies of human emotion, embodying a deeply flawed yet redeemable character.

Hong Yu's life is an emotional tapestry woven with adversity. As she bravely traverses the challenges of her

existence, the revelation of her birth name An Ya serves as a catalyst for her quest to understand her true identity and find her rightful place in the society. With her sharp intellect and complex nature, An Ya grapples with the perpetual conflict between understanding what is right and prioritising her own needs.

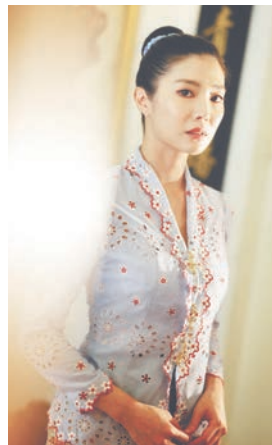
"This reality is profoundly poignant, and I believe many can relate to it," Wong explained.

Preparation

In preparation for her role, Wong undertook extensive research, including watching films such as *Memoirs of a Geisha* to immerse herself in the emotional landscape of her character.

She also visited Malacca, the birthplace of the Baba Nyonya culture, where she engaged with the rich heritage and family dynamics of the Peranakan community.

"Meeting with Lee Yuen Thien, the fifth generation Baba of Malacca, who

Wong as An Ya in *Emerald Hill*.

is also the vice-president of the Baba & Nyonya Association of Malaysia was particularly enlightening. It helped me understand the refinements of family life within a Peranakan household," she shared.

Wong's dedication to her craft is



Wong has spent a day at the Baba & Nyonya Heritage Museum in Malacca to understand more about the rich heritage of intricate customs.

evident in her proactive approach as she also engaged a Chinese teacher to polish her script delivery and sought guidance from her acting mentor, actor Christopher Lee, to explore creative interpretations of the role.

"I identified pivotal scenes essential to An Ya's development and worked closely with Christopher to bring them to life," she explained.

Tale of survival

Despite the emotional and mental challenges of embodying such a multifaceted character, Wong remains grateful for the opportunity.

"I (have) learnt to accept the imperfections and moral convolutions inherent in such roles. To truly shine in a character like this,

one must embrace their flaws and contradictions," she reflected.

Wong believes *Emerald Hill - The Little Nyonya Story* is not just a tale of survival. It is a rich exploration of identity, culture and human experience.

She expresses hopes to bring authenticity and depth to this character, allowing the audience to connect with her journey on a personal level.

Emerald Hill became the first Mediacorp Chinese drama to hit the number one spot overnight on Netflix Singapore after its premier last month.

The series is also available on Malaysia's Astro AEC Channel and Sooka TV.

Jackson Wang drops single *GBAD* as precursor to new album

JACKSON Wang is sending a bold message with the release of *GBAD*, the new single from his upcoming album *Magic Man 2*.

With a tongue-in-cheek edge, Wang embraces the reality that setting boundaries may make you the villain in someone else's story.

The song sheds Wang's people-pleasing tendencies, offering a sharp reflection on the uncomfortable price of personal growth.

An unapologetic, alt-R&B cut, *GBAD* pairs Wang's vocals with laid-back, jazzy production from Grammy-winning producer Dem Jointz.

The accompanying melancholic music video, directed by Rich Lee, shows Wang's Magic Man alter ego in an idyllic town, where he is repeatedly called on to save the day.

The surreal, dark comedy video explores Magic Man's existential

crisis as he feels overlooked and under-appreciated, mirroring Wang's own personal experiences.

Last month, Wang announced *Magic Man 2* is set to arrive in 2025 and shared the riveting single *High Alone*, which explores isolation and self-destruction and introduces the deeply personal themes of the upcoming album.

The sequel will continue to build on the evolution of Wang's Magic Man persona, first introduced in his 2022 Billboard-charting album. Since its release, *High Alone* has reached number one on Apple Music in 22 countries and regions.

A project that Wang produced himself and has worked on for more than a year, *Magic Man 2* unfolds across four chapters, each representing a different stage of grief.

From manic highs fuelled by denial, to painful reckonings with

lost identity, to shedding people-pleasing tendencies and finally finding peace through acceptance, *Magic Man 2* is Wang's most unfiltered and vulnerable work to date.

Magic Man first began as a mask, a way to process his darkest emotions and internal struggles. With *Magic Man 2*, the mask begins to slip, revealing a deeper truth about Wang's inner world, battles with betrayal and his ongoing fight to stay true to himself.

Wang has over 100 million followers, making him the most-followed artiste in China on Instagram. In addition to his record-breaking success as a solo artiste, Wang was recently named creative director for Nike and Jordan.

He also serves as a global ambassador for Louis Vuitton, Cartier and Hennessy.

GBAD is available for streaming.



This bold and emotionally-charged release marks yet another breakthrough in Wang's musical journey, showcasing his evolution in creativity and artistic expression.



Jessia is known for crafting emotionally charged anthems that pair unfiltered honesty with undeniable hooks. – PIC BY CHASE HANSSEN

Pop singer Jessia drops new single

FRESH off her debut headline tour, pop singer-songwriter Jessia has released her latest single *Moved Around You*. The artist returns with a track that seamlessly blends her signature catchy pop energy with raw, relatable storytelling.

A deeply self-reflective anthem, *Moved Around You* captures the ache of giving your all to someone who never fully gave it back. Blending soaring melodies, conversational lyricism and an irresistibly infectious chorus, Jessia transforms heartbreak into resilience. At a time when so many people keep their guards up, this track is a celebration of vulnerability and the real emotions that come with taking a chance on love. With her signature mix of honesty and empowerment, she once again showcases her knack for turning life's messiest emotions into pure pop perfection.

"*Moved Around You* is for anyone who fell too deep for the casual relationship. This is the anthem for the situation where that stung more than others. It always sucks falling harder than the other person but this song brings the power back and shines a light on the fact that they took the risk and put their heart out there. So many people are guarded these days when it comes to dating, this song celebrates vulnerability and gives permission to say situationships can hurt sometimes too," said Jessia.

With over 400 million streams to her name, Jessia has built a reputation for crafting emotionally charged anthems that pair unfiltered honesty with undeniable hooks. Her music – both raw and unapologetic – embraces the full spectrum of human emotion, creating a space where fans feel understood, seen and celebrated.

Since her viral breakout in 2021, Jessia has taken the music industry by storm. She quickly became a global sensation with her viral hit *I'm Not Pretty*, which became an anthem of self-acceptance, capturing the attention of millions, including Grammy-nominated artist Bebe Rexha, who joined Jessia for a remix of the song. This success paved the way for her debut EP *How Are You?*, which garnered widespread acclaim and cemented her as a powerful voice in pop, earning her the Breakthrough Artist Award at the 2022 Juno Awards. She then joined OneRepublic for a tour across Asia in 2023, performing in major cities throughout the region, including Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Manila, Jakarta, Singapore, Bangkok and Taipei. Reflecting her growing presence in Southeast Asia, Jessia's top global streaming markets include the Philippines (second), Malaysia (eighth) and Indonesia (10th).

2024 marked a turning point in Jessia's career. She independently released her sophomore EP *Okay With Every Part*, embracing full creative control and stepping into a bold new era with over 20 million streams to date. She then closed out the year with her first-ever headline tour.

Fab four

Sam Mendes planning quartet of Beatles movies

SAM Mendes will release four movies about The Beatles in the same month, the director announced earlier this week, with Paul Mescal playing Paul McCartney and Barry Keoghan portraying Ringo Starr in "the first bingeable theatrical experience."

The "four-film cinematic event," hitting theatres in April 2028, will each focus on a different member of the legendary British pop quartet, with Harris Dickinson playing John Lennon and Joseph Quinn as George Harrison.

"Each one is told from the particular perspective of just one of the guys. They intersect in different ways – sometimes overlapping, sometimes not," Mendes told the CinemaCon movie theatre convention in Las Vegas.

"They are four very different human beings. Perhaps this is a chance to understand them a little more deeply. But together, all four films will tell the story of the greatest band in history."

Filming is about to begin, and is expected to take more than a year, said Mendes. The exact order in which the movies will be released has not yet been revealed.

"I had been trying to make a film about The Beatles for years, but I had temporarily given up," explained *American Beauty* Oscar-winner Mendes.

"I just felt the story of the band was too huge to fit into a single movie, and that turning it into a TV mini-series just somehow did not feel right."

The announcement came at the start of the CinemaCon trade convention, where movie theatre owners gather annually in Las Vegas to hear Hollywood studios' plans for the coming months and years.

While 2025 had been widely touted as the year that the movie industry would bounce back, the box office has so far endured a terrible start, reeling from high-profile flops like Disney's live-action *Snow White* and sci-fi *Mickey 17*.

The US\$1.3 billion (RM5.8 billion) taken in North America receipts so far is 7% below an already lean Q1 2024, which was itself



Mendes reveals he has been trying to make a Beatles film for years. – AFP/PIC

derailed by the previous year's massive Hollywood strikes.

All this is roiling an industry that has never fully returned to pre-pandemic profit levels and had informally adopted the motto "Survive till 2025."

So CinemaCon at the Caesars Palace casino is a key chance for Hollywood to present upcoming films to theatre owners – and, hopefully, inspire a bit of confidence that the good times are coming back.

The event kicked off Monday night with a presentation from Sony Pictures.

As well as sharing news about Mendes' Beatles movies, the studio unveiled information about its wildly popular *Spider-Man* films.

A new live-action film starring Tom Holland, *Spider-Man: Brand New Day*, was confirmed for July 2026, while animated movie *Spider-Man: Beyond the Spider-Verse* received a June 2027 release date.

The studio also teased this summer's *28 Years Later*, a long-in-development apocalyptic horror sequel from Danny Boyle, starring Jodie Comer, Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Ralph Fiennes.

Boyle nodded to speculation about the next actor to play James Bond by joking that Taylor-Johnson "may or may not be the next Bond" – and how Fiennes "probably should

have been."

During the week at CinemaCon, Amazon MGM gave a major presentation, just days after unveiling new producers for the 007 franchise it spent billions of dollars acquiring.

Warner Bros will be desperate to recover from flops such as *Mickey 17* and *The Alto Knights* – a Robert De Niro film that took just US\$5 million worldwide on its recent opening weekend, despite having cost US\$45 million to make.

The studio has a mouth-watering lineup, including Leonardo DiCaprio film *One Battle After Another*, and a major new *Superman* film that it hopes can revitalise its entire flagging DC superhero franchise.

In a near-annual tradition, Paramount showcased its latest *Mission: Impossible* film, prompting the inevitable rumours of a Tom Cruise appearance on the stage of the casino's giant auditorium.

Other studios that presented this week include Universal Pictures, with its latest *Jurassic World* and *Wicked* sequels, and Lionsgate, home of Keanu Reeves's many *John Wick* movies.

Disney, with an ever-growing roster of Marvel superheroes and a new *Avatar* sequel due in December, wrapped up the event on Thursday night. – AFP

What to stream in April

BETWEEN eagerly awaited heavy-hitters and new launches, the month of April promises to be a busy one for fans of binge streaming.

In addition to the new season of *Black Mirror*, the month sees the return of critically acclaimed *The Last of Us* as well as many new releases with star-studded casts.

April 2
➔ *Banger* (film) – Netflix

April 3
➔ *Pulse* (series) – Netflix
➔ *Devil May Cry* (animated series) – Netflix
➔ *The Bondsman* (series) – Prime Video

April 4
➔ *Karma* (series) – Netflix
➔ *Dying for Sex* (series) – Hulu/Disney+

April 8
➔ *How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)* (series, season 4) – Netflix
➔ *The Handmaid's Tale* (series, season 6) – Hulu, Disney+



Asterix & Obelix: The Big Fight will premiere on Netflix on April 30. – PIC FROM FACEBOOK @ASTERIX&OBELIXMOVIE

April 10
➔ *Black Mirror* (series, season 7) – Netflix
➔ *Hacks* (series, season 4) – Max

April 11
➔ *The Gardener* (series) – Netflix
➔ *Your Friends & Neighbours* (series) – Apple TV+

April 13
➔ *The Last of Us* (series, season 2) – Max
➔ *Godfather of Harlem* (series, season 4) – MGM+

April 15
➔ *The Glass Dome* (series) – Netflix

April 16
➔ *Government Cheese* (series) – AppleTV+

April 17
➔ *Ransom Canyon* (series) – Netflix

April 18
➔ *Jane* (series, season 3) – AppleTV+
➔ *iHostage* (film) – Netflix

April 22
➔ *Andor* (series, season 2) – Disney+
➔ *Bullet Train Explosion* (film) – Netflix

April 24
➔ *Etoile* (series) – Prime Video
➔ *You* (series, season 5) – Netflix

April 25
➔ *WondLa* (series, season 2) – AppleTV+
➔ *Havoc* (film) – Netflix

April 30
➔ *Carême* (series) – AppleTV+
➔ *Asterix & Obelix: The Big Fight* (series) – Netflix
➔ *The Eternaut* (series) – Netflix

Knight Riders trample Sunrisers

Venkatesh blitz powers Kolkata to big win over Hyderabad

INDIA batter Venkatesh Iyer smashed 60 off 29 balls to fire holders Kolkata Knight Riders to an 80-run hammering of Sunrisers Hyderabad in a comeback IPL win yesterday.

Venkatesh's knock and 91-run stand with fellow left-hander Rinku Singh propelled Kolkata to 200-6 at their home in Eden Gardens after being invited to bat first in a rematch of last year's final.

Venkatesh proved his worth in a blitz laced with seven fours and three sixes after Kolkata paid a whopping US\$2.8 million (RM12.6m) for him in the November auction.

Skipper Ajinkya Rahane, who hit 38, and Angkrish Raghuvanshi, who struck 50, lay the foundations of the total in their partnership of 81 after openers fell early.

Bowlers led by impact substitute Vaibhav Arora bowled Hyderabad out for 120 in 16.4 overs as Kolkata bounced back from a crushing defeat to Mumbai Indian in their previous game early this week.

"This game was really important for us," said Ajinkya.



Kolkata Knight Riders' Venkatesh Iyer in action. - REUTERS/PIC

"Winning by a big margin was crucial for us.

"Last two games were not up to the mark for us. But we learned a lot from our mistakes. This is a great example for us as a batting unit."

Kolkata moved from the bottom to fifth in the 10-team table and Hyderabad sunk to the last spot with three defeats in four matches.

"Not a great night tonight," said Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins.

"In the mid-innings break, we thought it was gettable. It was a pretty good wicket. Gave away few too many in the field and obviously fell short (with the bat)."

Hyderabad were in trouble at 9-3 and then 44-4 after seam bowler Arora struck two early blows including Australia's Travis Head out on the second ball for four.

Left-handed opener Abhishek Sharma fell to Harshit Rana and Arora made it three down after he dismissed another left-hander Ishant Kishan for two.

Sri Lanka's IPL debutant Kamindu Mendis hit 27 before he became Sunil Narine's wicket and the rest of the batting crumbled.

South African wicketkeeper-batsman Heinrich Klaasen made 33 in a disappointing show by Hyderabad. - AFP

Rejuvenated Siraj praised for 'fire in belly'

PRAISE was heaped on Mohammed Siraj yesterday after his match-winning spell for Gujarat Titans at his former club Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Siraj, who was dropped by India for the Champions Trophy, looked like a man with a point to prove to the national selectors and the RCB management as he took 3-19 at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Wednesday, a venue that was his home for seven seasons.

RCB released Siraj after last season and the India fast bowler was bought by Gujarat for US\$1.4 million (RM6.3m) in the November auction.

Former India opener Virender Sehwag said Siraj's IPL form was motivated by his omission from the Champions Trophy last month, which India won in Dubai.

"Somewhere I feel he is hurt that he wasn't part of the Champions Trophy squad, and I saw that fire," Sehwag said on website *Cricbuzz*.

"That's what we expect from a young fast bowler: Yeah, you didn't pick me? Now I will show you."

New Zealand's Kane Williamson, commenting on *JioStar*, said: "He bowled with real fire in his belly, led the attack with aggression, and bowled with some excellent pace."

Siraj's bowling helped restrict Bengaluru to 169-8, a total Gujarat overhauled by eight wickets with 13 balls to spare as England's Jos Buttler hit an unbeaten 73 off 39 deliveries.

"(Siraj) was deservedly named player of the match," Williamson added.

"While Jos Buttler was outstanding and back to his best in the second innings, Siraj set the tone early on, making a significant impact."

Siraj finished his spell with the wicket of England's Liam Livingstone, caught behind for 54.

"It was emotional because I played for seven years here," Siraj said of returning to Bengaluru.

"There was some nervousness and some emotion but the moment I got the ball in my hand, it was full on." - AFP

INSIDE EDGE

Rabada returns to South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA'S Kagiso Rabada has left his IPL team Gujarat Titans to return home due to personal reasons, the franchise said in a statement yesterday. The pace bowler missed Gujarat's eight-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Wednesday after he played the first two matches for the team in the T20 tournament. "Kagiso Rabada has returned to South Africa to deal with an important personal matter," Gujarat said in a statement. Rabada, 29, took a wicket each in his two outings at the team's home at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. Gujarat, led by Shubman Gill and who won a title in their debut season in 2022, have won two and lost one of their three matches in this edition.

Buttler finds freedom

WITH the weight of the England captaincy off his shoulders, Jos Buttler is relishing the experience of batting with freedom, the Gujarat Titans player said after his match-winning knock against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the Indian Premier League (IPL). England battled inconsistency for a lengthy period but appears to have rediscovered his form since joining Gujarat and is currently the league's third-highest scorer after two fifties in three matches. "I was trying to play with lots of freedom, lots of intent," he said after his 73 not out of 39 balls secured Gujarat's eight-wicket victory against the previously unbeaten Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Wednesday. "I had a few months of pretty unenjoyable cricket, so trying to make sure I'm out there giving my best, and obviously a new team, new franchise, and excited to be here."

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PIN HIGH

Ryder grabs Texas Open lead

SAM RYDER birdied six of his final seven holes to shoot a bogey-free, 9-under 63 and take the first-round lead at the Valero Texas Open yesterday in San Antonio. Ryder was tied for the lead with Keith Mitchell (64) when he stepped to the tee at the par-5, 613-yard 18th hole at TPC San Antonio's Oaks Course. He stopped his third shot about a foot from the hole and tapped in for the go-ahead birdie. Mitchell is alone in second, while Brian Harman is third after a 6-under 66. Jordan Spieth is tied with Carson Young at 5-under 67. Ryder, 35, has never won on the PGA Tour and holds the No. 154 ranking in the world. If he wins the tournament, he would earn an invitation to the Masters next week. "I've been focused... I feel like my game's been in a good place and I've been generally healthy so I feel like I know kind of my DNA as a player and I've been able to just kind of hone in on that," Ryder said.

Korda stays alive at Match Play

WORLD NO. 1 and defending champion Nelly Korda beat Jennifer Kupcho 1-up yesterday to keep alive her hopes of advancing to the knockout stage of the LPGA Match Play in Las Vegas, Nevada. Korda survived what she called "very questionable" play coming down the stretch against Kupcho. She went 2-up with a par at the 12th hole and remained 2-up despite a bogey at 15. But Korda's bogey at the par-five 16th saw Kupcho claw back a hole before Korda closed out the win as they tied each of the last two holes with pars. "Definitely don't have my best stuff right now," said Korda, whose victory at Shadow Creek golf course last year was one of her seven LPGA titles in 2024. "That's the greatest thing about match play is even if you don't have your best stuff you have to grind it out."



Nelly Korda looks on from the 11th tee during the second round of the LPGA Match Play. - AFP/PIC

Scheffler eyes third Masters crown

World No. 1 'feeling pretty good' ahead of Augusta challenge

TOP-RANKED Scottie Scheffler likes the state of his game as he prepares to defend his Masters title, having bounced back from an early season hand injury.

Scheffler seeks his third Masters title in four seasons and second in a row. Only Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and Nick Faldo have captured back-to-back Masters crowns. Only Nicklaus has won three in four years.

In the past three years, Scheffler has won two or three times before the Masters. This year, he hasn't lifted a trophy

before coming to Augusta National, his start slowed by a hand injury suffered cooking Christmas dinner.

Still, Scheffler shared second at the Houston Open in his final Masters tuneup and likes where his game is at as the year's first major arrives.

"Feeling pretty good. Excited about the stuff that we're working on right now and game feels like it's in a good spot," Scheffler said.

"I feel like I'm getting a little bit sharper and I feel like I'm improving a little bit... I'm definitely in the swing of a normal year now."

Scheffler credits shotmaking control and solid strategy for playing Augusta National as his reasons for success over the famed layout.

"When I'm in control of my golf ball, I have very good strategy for playing the golf course. But at the end of the day, you've got to hit the shots. That's what it is at Augusta," Scheffler said.

"I could talk about it all day long about where to play it and the certain type of shot to hit but if you don't pull a shot off, you're going to be punished out there."

"Around Augusta National, what makes the golf course so special is always the opportunity to pull off a great shot. I think that style of golf is a bit more exciting than just your typical event."

Scheffler, whose nine triumphs last

year included the Paris Olympics and Tour Championship, says it feels like he enters another world when he drives down Magnolia Lane.

"When you pull in the gates, I think that's the most special thing for me. I really feel like you're just kind of turning into this whole other world," Scheffler said.

"It's like a different place than the world just outside the gates. And you pull in, and everything else just kind of melts away."

Since winning his first PGA Tour title at Phoenix in February 2022, Scheffler has dominated, impressing fans and rivals alike with his calm demeanor and relaxed attitude.

"What Scottie has done the last couple years in golf is amazing," second-ranked Rory McIlroy said. "He's great for the game."

"His season last year is up there with one of the all-time great seasons in the history of the game."

"He's an amazing player, he's a great person as well. I have nothing but respect and admiration for Scottie."

Scheffler keeps his attention on the challenges at hand, even with a major title at stake.

"What has always worked best for me is staying in the present, working hard preparing for each event," Scheffler said. - AFP

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PITLANE

Norris fastest in Japan GP first practice

MCLAREN'S championship leader Lando Norris went fastest in first practice for the Japanese Grand Prix yesterday with home racer Yuki Tsunoda sixth on his Red Bull debut. Tsunoda was 0.623sec slower than Norris's quickest lap of 1min 28.549sec and 0.107sec behind Red Bull teammate and four-time world champion Max Verstappen. Mercedes' George Russell was second, 0.163sec behind Norris. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was third ahead of teammate Lewis Hamilton and Verstappen. Japan's Tsunoda was catapulted into a Red Bull seat last week when Liam Lawson was axed just two races into the Formula One season. Lawson, back in an RB car following his demotion, was 13th. Tsunoda looked determined to make the most of his chance in warm sunshine on a Suzuka track that he is very familiar with. "Let's focus on ourselves," he said over the team radio, later adding that the car was "interesting" to drive. Verstappen is looking for his fourth straight Japanese Grand Prix title but he did not appear happy with his car. "It's super-weird man, the car is flexing a lot," the Dutchman said over the team radio.

Thailand's bid for F1 race very serious: Albon

BRITISH-THAI DRIVER Alex Albon says that Thailand is taking its bid to host a Formula One race "very seriously" after meeting the prime minister and seeing the plans for himself. Thailand is among a number of countries eager to host the sport for the first time, with a race around the streets of the capital Bangkok mooted. F1 chief Stefano Domenicali met Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra last month and Albon paid her a visit before this weekend's Japanese Grand Prix. "We're trying to help get the Thai GP under way and seeing how we can help," Albon, who races for Williams and is Thailand's only F1 driver, told reporters yesterday at Suzuka. Albon added: "It's moving along, obviously nothing's finalised but it's really good to see the commitment from Thailand. They're taking it very seriously and I think as a product, they have a very strong product."

McLaren have best combination, say Norris

FORMULA ONE championship leader Lando Norris believes McLaren's strong start to the season is the result not only of having the best car but also the best combination of drivers on the grid. The 25-year-old Briton won the season opener in Australia and his Australian teammate Oscar Piastri took the chequered flag in China two weeks ago with Norris coming home second to give McLaren a strong early lead in the team standings. "I think just the fact we have two good drivers is obviously making the biggest difference because, in certain cases, I don't think we necessarily had the quickest one" he told reporters ahead of the Japanese Grand Prix. "But the fact that we have just two good drivers pushing each other makes, I think, just a bigger difference than people expect and take acknowledgement for."

Napoli face in-form Bologna scrutiny

NAPOLI'S pursuit of Serie A leaders Inter Milan will face a severe test on Tuesday (2.45am Malaysian time) when they travel to in-form Bologna, who have revived their own top-four aspirations.

Antonio Conte's side sit three points behind Inter with eight matches remaining, leaving them with little margin for error.

The positive news for Conte is that key midfielder Scott McTominay has returned to full training after recovering from a recent bout of flu.

With Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa also back to full fitness, Conte's squad is now at near full strength, with the exception of injured defender Leonardo Spinazzola.

Bologna, who have climbed to fourth in the standings after a five-match winning streak, will be without AC Milan loanee Davide Calabria, who is set to miss several weeks due to an ankle sprain, according to Italian media.

Leaders Inter, who will visit 16th-placed Parma at midnight today, have a growing injury list, with more bad news potentially on the horizon.

Central defender Denzel Dumfries's recovery from a hamstring injury could take longer than expected, according to media reports, with his estimated return not for another three to four weeks.

Lautaro Martinez, Federico Dimarco, and Marko Arnautovic are also doubts ahead of a critical point in the season as Inter face a two-legged Champions League quarterfinal against Bayern Munich and the second leg of their Coppa Italia semifinal against AC Milan in April.

For Atalanta, the mood in Bergamo suggests the title race is all but over for Gian Piero Gasperini's third-placed side, who have suffered back-to-back league defeats and sit nine points behind Inter.

Amid media speculation about his own future at

the club, Gasperini declared the title race effectively over following their 2-0 home defeat to Inter in mid-March.

"It was an impossible dream that I think disappeared in the game against Inter," he said.

Atalanta will face a Lazio side with one win in their last six league matches.

Igor Tudor will take charge of his second match as Juventus head coach when they travel to AS Roma, who are finding some rhythm in the final stretch of the season.

Claudio Ranieri's side have won their last seven league games, which has propelled them up to sixth in the table.

Juve will hope to have midfielder Douglas Luiz and defender Andrea Cambiaso back for the clash, but centreback Federico Gatti will be out after suffering a leg fracture during last Saturday's 1-0 Serie A win over Genoa. - AFP

Betis test for Barca

Leaders face La Liga's surprise package as title race heats up

LA LIGA leaders Barcelona's 21-game unbeaten run will face a test tomorrow (3am Malaysian time) when they host a Real Betis side who have already stunned the Catalans' title rivals Real and Atletico.

Barca are top on 66 points, three ahead of Real Madrid and nine clear of Atletico. Real and Barca are both chasing three trophies but the pacesetters are favourites to win La Liga as the only team in Europe's top-five leagues yet to lose in 2025.

However, Barca's next opponents Betis, who are on a six-game La Liga winning streak, have been the surprise package this term.

They denied Real Madrid a chance to go top with a 2-1 win in March after ending Atletico's 10-game unbeaten run in October.

Barcelona were held 2-2 at Betis in the reverse fixture in December but thrashed Manuel Pellegrini's side 5-1 to knock them out of the Copa del Rey in January.

Sixth-placed Betis are level on 47 points with Villarreal in fifth and trail fourth-placed Athletic Bilbao by six as they push for a European spot while also bidding to win the Conference League.

"We are not

unbeatable because we have lost some matches (before)," Barcelona midfielder Pedri said. "There are things to improve, and we must be self-critical. But we are in great form and full of confidence."

"I think high pressing is something that defines us. That forward line, the intensity we play with, staying calm on the ball... the attackers make the difference, and it shows."

Barcelona's attacking prowess stands out as they top La Liga's scoring chart with 82 goals - 20 more than Real Madrid.

If Barca are to claim a treble in boss Hansi Flick's debut season they will likely need to beat Madrid at least twice, in the Copa del Rey final on April 26 and in La Liga in May.

Real have failed to beat

their rival so far this season, drawing both of their fixtures with Atleti and suffering a 4-0 humiliation at home to Barca. They had to go through the playoffs to reach the Champions League knockout rounds.

"This season has been very tough, but we made it to another final," Real Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger said. "We are at Real Madrid and we have to go for it until the end."

With nine league games remaining, second-placed Real will look to keep pace today when they host 15th-placed Valencia (10.15pm), who sit four points above the drop zone.

Third-placed Atletico will try to rediscover their early-season form when they visit mid-table Sevilla tomorrow (10.15pm).

Atletico's Champions League exit to Real Madrid was followed this week by defeat in the Copa del Rey by Barcelona as Diego Simeone's side's winless run stretched to three matches, with fans fearing a fourth straight season without a trophy.

"Two eliminations that hurt, but we still have one goal left to keep fighting for. It's time to get up once again," Atleti defender Robin Le Normand wrote on Instagram yesterday.

Forward Julian Alvarez added: "We fought until the end. We will keep fighting for the league. Thank you Atletico (fans) for always being there." - Reuters

Hamilton rubbishes claim he's lost faith in Ferrari

■ BY KIERAN JACKSON

LEWIS HAMILTON has dismissed claims he has "lost faith" in Ferrari after their double disqualification in China as "complete rubbish."

Hamilton won the sprint race in China last time out but was disqualified from the grand prix, as was teammate Charles Leclerc, after both Ferrari cars failed post-race technical checks.

It leaves the seven-time world champion with just nine points after the first two rounds of the 2025 season, leaving him ninth in the standings and 35 points behind leader Lando Norris already.

However, Hamilton insists he still backs the team "100%", following his move from Mercedes in the off-season.

"I saw something asking whether I was losing faith in the team which is complete rubbish," he said at media day ahead of this weekend's

Japanese Grand Prix.

"I have absolute 100% faith in this team."

Hamilton also admitted that he did not expect to be fighting for the championship at the start of this year, as he continues to adapt to his new surroundings with Ferrari.

"There was a lot of hype at the start of the season - what's important to remember is that this is my first year with the team," Hamilton said, in Suzuka.

"I didn't expect to win from the get-go, and I didn't expect us to be fighting for the championship straight away."

"I've tried to spend this time observing how the team operates now we're running, learning as much and as fast as I can."

Ferrari came into the new season expected to contend for both drivers' and constructors' championships but a rocky start to the campaign

has left them with just 17 points from two races.

Hamilton had a number of testy exchanges with race engineer Riccardo Adami, including over the swapping of places with Leclerc, in China.

The British driver says he still needs time to get used to his new car.

"We have definitely got a lot of work to do to make sure it is better moving forwards," Hamilton added.

"I am still learning about this car, I have not tested every item that they have yet."

"I didn't feel frustration or anything after (China), it is what it is. We have gone through everything at the factory. Lots of learnings, we take the highs and lows together as a team."

"The most impressive thing is how the team have taken it, how they've worked through the data to see how we progress from here." - The Independent



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Devils looking for salvation

MANCHESTER UNITED can claim a League double over Manchester City for the first time in five years and Ruben Amorim needs that victory more than ever in a season where the club are headed for their worst finish in Premier League history.

United have only two wins from their last seven games but form is rarely a factor in the Manchester derby and Amorim can take heart from the fact that his side snatched an unlikely victory the last time the two sides met.

But while City, who corrected their course after plummeting down the table, look primed to qualify for the Champions League and potentially win the FA Cup, United have lost their way to cast a pall of gloom over the home of the 20-times champions.

A 1-0 loss at Nottingham Forest on Wednesday left United 13th in the table after 13 defeats. A loss

Misfiring United seek revival and rare double in Manchester derby

to Pep Guardiola's City side would see the Old Trafford club equal their forgettable 2023-24 record of 14 defeats in a Premier League season.

With forwards Joshua Zirkzee and Rasmus Hojlund misfiring, a desperate Amorim threw defender Harry Maguire into the attack in the forlorn hope that a big man could strike against Forest.

The pressure has been mounting on the Portuguese manager who has admitted he does not have time to turn things around.

"We know that this season is going to be like that - win momentum, lose momentum. We continue going into the next match," Amorim said.

But one big man he will not have to worry about is City striker Erling Haaland. The

Norwegian netted twice on his last visit to Old Trafford but an ankle injury will keep him out until the end of the season.

That would come as a huge relief to any defender but United will still be on high alert with City's January recruit Omar Marmoush on a hot streak having netted in his last three games.

"He has a good sense, good numbers for the short time he's been with us. Dynamic, good pressing, really pleased for him," Guardiola said after the Egypt international scored on Thursday in City's 2-0 win over Leicester City.

Arsenal travel to Everton in the early game on Saturday without defender Gabriel, the third of Mikel Arteta's players to have been sidelined with a season-ending injury.

The Gunners are 12 points behind Liverpool

and running out of games to catch Arne Slot's team, who need 13 points from their last eight games to seal the title.

Seventh-placed Aston Villa, who are three points off the top four, host Forest in third, with boss Unai Emery trying to balance domestic ambitions with their Champions League quarterfinal against his former club Paris St Germain next week.

At the other end of the table, Tottenham Hotspur host bottom side Southampton, who are trying to avoid finishing the season as the worst team in Premier League history.

With 10 points from 30 games, a draw would bring Saints level with the 2007-08 Derby County side that finished the campaign with a paltry 11 points. - Reuters

Grealish determined to play key role in City's Euro push

BY ANDY HAMPSON

JACK GREALISH insists he will be ready to fire whenever called upon in Manchester City's run-in.

The England midfielder marked his first Premier League start since before Christmas with his first goal in the competition since December 2023 in Thursday's 2-0 stroll against relegation strugglers Leicester.

It has been a frustrating campaign for the 29-year-old with fitness issues and a lack of form seeing him fall behind Savinho and Jeremy Doku in manager Pep Guardiola's pecking order. He was also overlooked by new England boss Thomas Tuchel last month.

Yet, featuring alongside Savinho and Doku, Grealish impressed in a central role as the champions made light work of the Foxes at the Etihad Stadium and opened the scoring after just two minutes.

Grealish said: "I think it was actually the same last year - I didn't go in the national team in March, then I played a lot, at (Crystal) Palace and Real Madrid home and away. I ended up playing a lot in April.

"At the moment it's difficult because we have so many players, especially in the attacking areas, and I think every single one of us is fit, apart from Erling (Haaland). It's going to be difficult, but I'm ready when called upon."

The strike effectively ended the game as a contest, even at such an early stage, as Leicester meekly surrendered to a seventh successive loss in which they have not even scored a goal.

Omar Marmoush added the second in the 29th minute after a goalkeeping error by Mads Hermansen.

Despite City's victory, the battle for Champions League places remains tight with several teams - including Newcastle, Chelsea and Aston Villa - all chasing the fourth and potentially fifth qualification spots behind the top three of Liverpool, Arsenal and Nottingham Forest.

City therefore feel they have little margin for error heading into tomorrow's (11.30pm Malaysian time) derby against Manchester United at Old Trafford.

"They beat us here early on in the season and that was a real difficult one to take," said Grealish.

"But we're going there on the back of two wins and with a lot of confidence. Fingers crossed, we can make our fans happy." - The Independent

Postecoglou insists touchline reaction misinterpreted

BY GEORGE SESSIONS

ANGE POSTECOGLOU insisted his controversial cupped ear celebration to Tottenham fans in a 1-0 loss at Chelsea had been misinterpreted on another bad night for the Australian.

Spurs slipped to a 16th defeat in the Premier League this season thanks to a 50th-minute header by Enzo Fernandez, but it only told half the story of a typically frenzied London derby.

VAR was required to rule out a fine strike by Moises Caicedo five minutes after Fernandez broke the deadlock at Stamford Bridge before Postecoglou's gesture to his own supporters after Pape Sarr had rifled in what appeared an equaliser after 69 minutes made headlines.

Postecoglou's decision to bring off Lucas Bergvall for Sarr prompted a small section of away fans to boo and subsequently chant "you don't know what you're doing" towards the 59-year-old, who has faced mounting scrutiny following a poor period amid a hefty list of injuries.

When Sarr marked his 64th-minute arrival with a long-range strike, it sparked a subdued reaction from Postecoglou, who appeared to cup his ear to the celebrating Tottenham fans before his mood turned sour

when referee Craig Pawson ruled out the goal for a foul on Caicedo.

"It's incredible how things get interpreted," Postecoglou explained.

"We'd just scored, I just wanted to hear them cheer because we'd been through a tough time and I thought it was a cracking goal. I wanted them to get really excited."

"I felt at that point we could potentially go on and win the game. I

just felt momentum was on our (side).

"It doesn't bother me, it's not the first time they've booed my substitutions or my decisions, that's fine."

"They're allowed to do that, but we'd just scored a goal, just scored an equaliser, I was just hoping we could get some excitement."

"If people want to read into that that somehow I'm trying to make a point about something, like I said, we'd been through a tough time, but I just felt there was a bit of a momentum shift there."

"If they get really behind the lads, I thought we had the momentum to finish on top of them."

Asked if he was in danger of alienating the fanbase with a celebration like that, Postecoglou reflected: "You know what, I am at such a disconnect with the world these days, that who knows. Maybe you're right."

"I don't know, but that's not what my intention was." - The Independent



Chelsea's Pedro Neto (left) fights for the ball with Tottenham Hotspur's Destiny Udogie during their Premier League match. - AFP/PIC

Blues boss Maresca relieved after dirty win

CHELSEA boss Enzo Maresca said he could have blown his side's chances of hanging on for a 1-0 win over Tottenham Hotspur yesterday by making defensive changes for the dying moments, only to realise that a full 12 minutes had been added on.

"We created chances enough in the first half, and then, to be honest, it has been my mistake because I did the change before I saw the extra time," a relieved-looking Maresca told reporters.

"When I saw 12 minutes, I saw that probably was too early to make that kind of change. But fortunately, we won the game, and we are happy."

With the clock ticking down, and Chelsea ahead through Enzo Fernandez's 50th-minute

header, Maresca replaced attacker Cole Palmer and Fernandez with defender Tosin Adarabioyo and midfield anchor Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall, packing his back line.

The change allowed Spurs to pour forward in their search for an equaliser during the long period of stoppage time, which came after two long VAR checks in the second half which ruled out goals for both sides.

Maresca was full of praise for the way his players soaked up the pressure to seal the win which gave Chelsea some fresh momentum in their hunt for a top four finish and a place in next season's Champions League.

"If you want to become a team, I think you need also to learn and to play in the way we played in the last 10 minutes: win a game in a

dirty way," the Italian said.

Maresca said the return of Senegal striker Nicolas Jackson from injury had given his side more shape, thanks to his incessant pressing of the Spurs defence. "For sure, with Nico we are a different team," the manager added.

The Italian manager knows Champions League qualification will be massive for the club's future, but he also wants to see his team continue their stylistic development.

"If you measure on the results, then for sure, if we achieve Champions League it's an important thing," the Italian added.

"But from my point of view, I try to see how we improve day by day and I can see, since the first day, that the team is getting better and better." - Reuters/Agencies

RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Chelsea 1
(Fernandez 50) Tottenham 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	30	22	7	1	70	27	73
Arsenal	30	17	10	3	55	25	61
Nottm Forest	30	17	6	7	50	35	57
Chelsea	30	15	7	8	54	37	52
Man City	30	15	6	9	57	40	51
Newcastle	29	15	5	9	49	39	50
Aston Villa	30	13	9	8	44	45	48
Brighton	30	12	11	7	48	45	47
Fulham	30	12	9	9	44	40	45
Bournemouth	30	12	8	10	49	38	44
Brentford	30	12	5	13	51	47	41
Crystal Palace	29	10	10	9	37	34	40
Man Utd	30	10	7	13	37	41	37
Tottenham	30	10	4	16	55	44	34
Everton	30	7	13	10	32	37	34
West Ham	30	9	7	14	33	50	34
Wolves	30	8	5	17	41	58	29
Ipswich	30	4	8	18	30	63	20
Leicester	30	4	5	21	25	67	17
Southampton	30	2	4	24	22	71	10

Tonali wants Newcastle back in Europe

BY DAMIAN SPELLMAN

SANDRO TONALI has his sights set firmly on the Champions League after blasting Newcastle into contention for a return.

The 24-year-old Italy international smashed home a remarkable winner to seal a 2-1 victory over Brentford at St James' Park on Thursday to leave the Magpies just a point behind fourth-placed Manchester City with a game in hand.

Tonali joined the club in a £55 million (RM302m) switch from AC Milan in July 2023 ahead of their last brush with Europe's big boys and is desperate for another taste.

He said: "I am happy for the team and happy for this win. It is three points that can help us come back to the Champions League. This is a massive win for us. We need to win every game at St James' Park."

"Now we play only (to be among) the first five teams, for the Champions League. It is a little bit tough, but we are lucky because there are five teams in the Champions League this season."

"The team is a little bit free, so it is much better for me and for the fans. Now we have nine finals to get back into the Champions League."

The Italian returned from a 10-month worldwide ban for breaching betting regulations during his time in Milan and has gradually established himself as the heartbeat of the team which lifted the Carabao Cup last month.

He said: "It was a difficult season. But now I am happy to come back free, come back happy. I am a new player. I just want to help this team and these players."

Head coach Eddie Howe has been hugely impressed with Tonali's transition to ball-playing holding midfielder.

He said: "Technically, he's an outstanding player. Sandro, the beauty of him, he doesn't tend to try to do difficult things."

"Now the goal he scored today is incredibly difficult, but just in his general play, he makes good decisions, he doesn't over-complicate the game." - The Independent

All-round ambition

Tang Jie sets sights on becoming complete shuttler

NATIONAL doubles shuttler Chen Tang Jie aims to be a versatile player, just like his idol Seo Seung-jae of South Korea.

Tang Jie said his decision to give it a shot in men's doubles while remaining a permanent fixture in mixed doubles was part of efforts to enhance his skills and help forge himself as a more complete shuttler.

"I am not like Seo Seung-jae. I'm just Chen Tang Jie, so that's why I want to try and learn from other men's doubles shuttlers to further improve my game."

"I personally asked the coach to let me play in both doubles events. In doubles, I still consider myself a rookie... I just hope I won't be a burden to my partner," he said when met at Akademi Badminton Malaysia (ABM) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Seung-jae is an excellent player in men's doubles as well as mixed doubles and is

currently considered one of the most versatile shuttlers, thus Tang Jie's fascination with the South Korean.

For the record, Seung-jae is the first South Korean player in 24 years to have won two gold medals in a single edition of the BWF World Championships - emerging triumphant in the mixed and men's doubles event in 2023 by partnering Chae Yoo-jung and Kang Min-hyuk respectively.

"If you ask me, yes, I am impressed with him. He is an excellent all-round shuttler. But I am still far behind... I just hope that I can be just like him one day," said Tang Jie, 27.

For now, though, Tang Jie is more focused on the next two competitions - the Taiwan Open (May 6-11) and Thailand Open (May 13-18) - with his new partner Chan Wen Tse in mixed doubles.

"Earlier, I asked her, 'Are you scared to partner me?'. I told her that although we do not

know what the future holds, I will always take our partnership more seriously and hope that it will work out well and we will be compatible," he said.

He added that there is no such thing as a senior or a junior player when it comes to mixed doubles pairing because what is important is the spirit of mutual support and continuing to learn from one another.

Asked about the possibility of him combining with Toh Ee Wei again, Tang Jie said he would leave that decision completely to the panel of coaches.

"I am just a player. Whatever the decision is, I will do what is best for both of us," he replied.

The Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) had previously announced that the mixed doubles combination of Tang Jie and Ee Wei would be split up following a decision taken at the Performance Committee meeting. - Bernama

Muhammad Ziyad ready to launch gold hunt

NATIONAL para shot put ace Muhammad Ziyad Zolkefli is all set to kickstart his hunt for gold at international championships this season once the Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebrations are done and dusted.

He said that his first target would be at the 2025 World Para Athletics Grand Prix in Morocco this month, followed by the Grand Prix in Paris (July) and the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi, India (October).

"The championships in Morocco will serve as a platform to reassess our potential again after such a long break since the Paralympic Games last year."

"Although it's already April, it feels like I'm just starting my season and my quest for gold this year. This phase is also for me to identify my weaknesses and shortcomings before the World Championships in India," he told Bernama recently.

Muhammad Ziyad, however, expressed some concerns as he has not competed on the international stage for some time.

He added that he would also need to be cautious with his diet as his first competition will be right after the Aidilfitri celebrations.

Regarding his training schedule during Ramadan, Muhammad Ziyad said: "I would train from morning till noon. Then, after breaking fast, I would perform the Tarawih prayers before training again from 10pm until 1am."

For the record, Muhammad Ziyad failed in his bid to reclaim the gold medal in men's shot put F20 category (intellectual disability) at the 2024 Paris Paralympics, settling for a silver medal with a throw of 17.18m at Stade de France. - Bernama

Malaysia's Muhammad Ziyad Zolkefli. - REUTERS/PIC

Duo all psyched up for BAC challenge

BESIDES focusing on their physical fitness, men's doubles pair Man Wei Chong-Tee Kai Wun are also paying more attention to the mental side of their game as they gear up for the 2025 Badminton Asia Championships (BAC) at the Ningbo Olympic Sports Centre Gymnasium in Ningbo, China from April 8-13.

The world No. 7 pair are confident that their efforts in getting the services of a psychologist will lead to a positive outcome on the court, come match day.

"The psychologist asked many questions about our thoughts and gave us the freedom to express our feelings," Wei Chong said when met at Akademi Badminton Malaysia (ABM) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"Once we are on the court, we need to be mentally strong and he gave us ideas on how to stay calm during tense moments."

He added that the championships this time would be their best opportunity to prove their capabilities on a bigger stage, having achieved encouraging results in

previous tournaments.

In January, Wei Chong-Kai Wun created history when they marched into the final of the Malaysia Open for the first time by defeating France's Christo-Toma Junior Popov before losing to China's Chen Bo Yang-Liu Yi.

At the BAC, Wei Chong-Kai Wun will begin their campaign against UAE's Dev Ayyappan-Dhiren Ayyappan and their first real test should be against 2025 All England runners-up Leo Rolly Carnando-Daniel Marthin of Indonesia. - Bernama

SHORTS

Turtles hoping for a draw

WITH all their key players back from injury and ready to rumble, Terengganu FC (TFC) are looking to take home at least a point from their Super League away game against Selangor FC at the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) Stadium today.

Head coach Badrul Afzan Razali said the Turtles, as TFC are known, must get at least a point to ensure they remain in the top five of the Super League standings.

"We know that Selangor are in fine form and set to finish as the Super League runners-up, but we have no choice... we need to get at

least a point," said the 49-year-old coach when contacted yesterday.

"In our remaining three matches in the Super League, every point is vital. If we can snatch all three points, that will be a bonus."

Badrul Afzan is, of course, glad that his key players, like (Akram Mahinin), Shakir (Engku Muhammad Nur Shakir Engku Yacob) and Azam (Muhammad Azam Azmi Murad) have recovered from their injuries and are ready to face the Red Giants tomorrow.

"Alhamdulillah, our main squad is almost complete. The import and local players are all in fine shape. No injuries nor suspensions to deal with," he said.

The Turtles also seem to have revenge on their mind, having lost 1-0 to the Red Giants at

their home ground earlier this season.

Johor appoint All Black legend as sports ambassador

JOHOR has appointed international sports legend Sonny Bill Williams as the state's Sports Ambassador.

Johor Sports Council (MSNJ) director Mohd Ekmaluddin Ishak said the appointment of the two-time Rugby World Cup winner from New Zealand marked an important milestone, demonstrating Johor's commitment to fostering sporting excellence and inspiring future athletes.

"He will serve as an ambassador of sports excellence and discipline, inspiring young athletes across Johor."

"He will also be actively involved in youth development programmes, sports clinics and mentorship initiatives to cultivate a strong sporting culture in the state," Mohd Ekmaluddin said at a press conference after the signing ceremony between MSNJ and Williams.

It was witnessed by Mohd Hairi Mad Shah, the state Youth, Sports, Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Committee chairman here today.

Williams expressed his gratitude and honour at being appointed as the Johor Sports Icon, hoping that his role will inspire the next generation of athletes in the state.

He added that it was the Regent of Johor Tunku Mahkota Ismail's vision in sports and for the people of Johor that convinced him to take on the role.



One game at a time

Liverpool not thinking about how early they could win Premier League title, says Slot

ARNE SLOT says Liverpool are not thinking about how early they could secure the Premier League title after going 12 points clear again with Thursday's Merseyside derby victory.

A day on from second-placed Arsenal bringing the gap down to nine by beating Fulham 2-1 at home, Liverpool replied by defeating Everton 1-0 at Anfield.

They now face Fulham themselves at Craven Cottage tomorrow (9pm Malaysian time) in the first of eight remaining games.

Asked how close he felt to clinching the title and about when it could happen if results went Liverpool's way, boss Slot told a press conference: "In theory so many things can happen.

"Again, we felt yesterday how hard it is to win a Premier League game. I think (Everton boss) David Moyes deserves a lot of credit for how his team was lined up, how difficult they made it for us. It's nice for us that we beat them because we know how hard it is.

"That also tells you that with eight games to go, it's every time a challenge, starting Sunday against Fulham, who are having a very good season as well.

"We are not working on theories about how many points this is, this, this. We are taking the challenge of Fulham on for Sunday, where we have to be at our best again, like yesterday, to get a result."

He added: "We've played 30 games now. Maybe there were three or four where the score was so clear that in the last 20 minutes it wasn't a problem anymore. Almost all of our other games have been really tight.



Arne Slot. - REUTERS/SPIC

"That probably tells you as well how big of an accomplishment it is that we are 12 points clear at the moment and doing so well.

"It's not like the team that won the League the last four times (Manchester City), where so many times, 20 minutes before the end, or at half-time, already 3-0 or 4-0 up. That's not our season.

"That's why I have to give so much credit to our players, because if you every time have to fight with a one-goal lead or you were one goal down, that's probably even harder than being 3-0 or 4-0 up at half-time."

The weekend sees a swapping of opposition, with Arsenal playing Everton at Goodison Park in today's early kickoff (7.30pm), and Slot said:

"It is a unique situation, and that's why I think it would have been more fair if all four teams would have played on the same day.

"We have more than enough rest for the Sunday game, so it's not a problem for us.

"But I do feel for Everton, that they play on a Wednesday night and have to have the early kickoff on Saturday. The good thing is they play at home and I know how much their fans can influence the game."

Goalkeeper Alisson Becker, absent for the Everton game due to concussion protocol, and right-back Conor Bradley are being assessed ahead of tomorrow's fixture. Trent Alexander-Arnold and Joe Gomez remain sidelined.

Alisson sustained a blow to the head in Brazil's 2-1 win over Colombia and was forced to depart the squad early.

Asked during his pre-Fulham press conference about Alisson's condition and if Curtis Jones could continue at right-back this weekend, the head coach replied: "That also depends on if players are coming back, the last one.

"Of course, Trent (Alexander-Arnold) and Joe (Gomez) will not be back in the upcoming weeks. Conor (Bradley), we have to wait and see if he is ready to be with the squad for Sunday.

"Then of course Curtis (Jones) is an option because he did well, but I think Jarell (Quansah) did well a few times in that position also. Let's wait and see which decision we make on Sunday.

"And with Ali, it is simple: it is a concussion and you have to tick all the boxes. The moment he does, he will be in goal. The moment he doesn't, we are following the protocol." - The Independent/Agencies



Chelsea's Trevoh Chalobah (centre) clashes with Tottenham Hotspur's Cristian Romero (4th left) and James Maddison (3rd left). - REUTERS/SPIC

Blues boss Maresca relieved after dirty win

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